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Christianity and the science
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CHRISTIANITY

AND THE

SCIENCE OF RELIGION.

A Discourse,

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IN CONNECTION WITH THE ASSEMBLING OF THE
WESLEYAN-METHODIST CONFERENCE
AND AS
THE TENTH LECTURE ON THE FOUNDATION OF THE LATE
JOHN FERNLEY, ESQ.

BY THE REV. J. S. BANKS.

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CHRISTIANITY AND THE SCIENCE OF RELIGION.

"Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."—1 Cor. i. 30.

The science of religion undertakes to do for the religions of the world what the science of language does for its languages. To such an undertaking there can be no preliminary objection. The phenomena of the religious life are just as legitimate objects of investigation as those of language, or, indeed, of any other branch of knowledge. This science differs considerably from the philosophies of religion, several of which bear great names. Far be it from us to deny to these systems great interest and value of their own. But they are intensely speculative; they proceed to a great extent independently of history and experience; they are based upon, and therefore vary with, their authors' peculiar theories of human nature, and in consequence rather excite than satisfy inquiry. The modern science of religion is far less ambitious and more practical. By classifying, comparing, and analysing the facts of religion it seeks to arrive at comprehensive views of its nature and laws. Religious philosophies profess to be complete, to give a complete *rationale* of their subject, whereas this science, by its very nature, is tentative and progressive. And yet it is much more than a history. It is just as little a mere enumeration of facts as any of the physical sciences. Its

aim is to discover the laws, and exhibit the mutual relations, of religious ideas and systems; to trace the order of their historical development; and thus to prepare the way for a judgment upon their meaning and value. No doubt this presupposes a general notion of the nature of religion, but by no means a complete theory. What a flood of light has been cast in this way upon the world of language! That world may be said to have been discovered within the last few years. Instead of being the chaos it seemed to be, the creature of caprice and accident, it is found to be just as much a scene of ordered harmony and law as the material world about us. We anticipate similar results in the sphere of religion.

Even in itself, apart from all higher considerations, such an inquiry must possess the greatest interest for every thoughtful mind. The analogies and contrasts, the points of contact and difference, brought to light, are of the most curious kind. As is well known, three great families of speech have been traced, exclusive of those tongues which as yet refuse to acknowledge kinship to others—the Aryan, which includes Sanscrit, Greek, Latin, Gothic, German, English, &c.; the Semitic, including the languages of Egypt, Arabia, Judæa, Babylon, Phœnicia, &c.; and the Turanian, of which Mongolian or Malay may stand as the representative. It is now shown that religion follows the same order. The Aryan, Semitic, and Turanian types of religion are as distinctly marked off from each other by peculiar characteristics as the three types of language, one of many evidences of the intimate connection between the two spheres. Is it not strange also to be told that by one of the closest of all ties, the tie of language, we English are nearly related to that great Eastern people which Providence has brought under our rule?

Sanscrit is the elder sister; Greek and Latin, Saxon and Celtic, are younger sisters in the same family. It would be wrong to say that words like deity, creed, *pater*, *mater*, have come into the West from India, because the truth is that these represent a large stock of words common to all the Aryan tongues. They formed the common inheritance which the several nations carried away from their early home. Even words like father and mother come to us from the same source, but by a different route, through northern instead of southern Europe. Professor Max Müller is never weary of telling us that the Latin Jupiter, the Greek *Ζεὺς πατήρ*, and the Sanscrit Dyaushpitâ, are one and the same word. *Dyaus* is Sanscrit for *sky*, *pitâ* for *father*. When the Vêdic Hindu looked up to his brilliant sky, he addressed the power dwelling there as Dyaushpitâ, Heaven-father; the Greek said *Ζεύς πατήρ*; the Roman Jupiter.

And still more curious than the points of resemblance are the points of contrast. Just as we find the greatest differences between brothers and sisters in one family, so is it in the families of nations. Who could be wider apart in character than the Hindu—speculative, mystic, his whole gaze turned inwards—and the Greek or Roman or Englishman, with his genius for the material and practical? Of the ancient Hindus it has been said with perfect truth, "There never was a nation believing so firmly in another world, and so little concerned about this. Their condition on earth is to them a problem; the real and eternal life a simple fact." And again, "They shut their eyes to this world of outward seeming and activity, to open them full on the world of thought and rest." We may remark, by the way, that our German brethren possess a larger share of Eastern speculativeness than ourselves.

Schopenhauer and Hartmann are veritable Buddhists. Is it not also worth noting that we Englishmen, and indeed all European Christendom, are to-day Aryan in speech and Semitic in religion? When Christianity triumphed in the West, our forefathers broke with the old faith of the Aryan world.

But if such inquiries are full of interest for the general student, how much more for the Christian believer? The subject touches him most nearly. Nothing which throws light on the religions of mankind can be indifferent to him. Nor, if he wished to be neutral, is he allowed to be so. The attitude taken by some teachers of the new science is such as to compel a Christian to define his own position. We need scarcely say that some schools, especially on the Continent, believe that in this science they have a key to the origin and history of all religion without exception. Christianity is brought under the law of natural evolution, and said to be reduced to the level of other faiths. These boasts on one side give rise to suspicion and fear on the other; but there is just as little reason for the boasts as for the fears. The boasts that we hear are altogether unfounded and premature. It is far too soon for a science not many days old, which has scarcely mastered its first principles, to claim that it has solved a problem so vast and intricate as that presented by universal religious history. There is nothing in the survey, as far as it has gone, to disturb, but much to confirm, a Christian's faith in revelation. It is indeed conceivable that, when the survey is completed, something may turn up to modify present conclusions. But when will that time come? Think of the magnitude of the field. Brahmanism and Buddhism in India, Confucianism and Taouism in China, Zoroastrianism

in Persia, have each a vast history and literature of their own. The same is true of Mohammedanism. How much has to be learnt, and how slowly, of the religions of ancient Egypt and Babylon and Phœnicia? The old paganism of Rome and Greece is little understood. Africa teems with the ruins of perishing superstitions, to say nothing of Polynesia and ancient America. In exploring this vast territory there is work for any number of workers any number of years. But we are not afraid of the complete survey modifying the results already arrived at. In religion as in language there are certain main lines which never vary. Beneath superficial differences there is a common nature. In any one section you may read the history of the whole.

There is no ground then for an attitude of distrust and reserve on the part of Christians towards this subject. We do not need to be exhorted, as we often are, to be willing to compare Christianity with other systems. This is what we are always doing. It is what Christian missionaries do every day. Such comparison by no means implies the concession of equality. On the contrary, we hold that the result of such comparison will always be to set in clearer relief the unique position of Christianity. Our attitude towards religious is the same as towards physical science. To facts, verified or verifiable, we cannot object. Theories based upon these facts we claim the right to challenge. Now the boasts, to which reference has been made, rest on mere theories—theories which represent rather what their authors wish than what they prove. We must regret that the subject should be put to such use, but it is only what has been done in other fields. This sceptical inclination is merely an infantine weakness which the manhood of religious science will not fail to outgrow.

The result so far has been in favour of Christian faith, and there is no reason to doubt that it will be increasingly so in the future.

Before proceeding to illustrate these positions, let us remark that this subject has been singularly fortunate in being introduced into this country by so distinguished an advocate as Professor Max Müller, of Oxford, to whom Indian missionaries owe special gratitude for all that he has done in bringing India home to the intelligence and sympathy of Englishmen. As we shall have to controvert some of the views put forth by this author in his various writings on this subject, we wish to render this sincere tribute to his learning and candour and gifts of exposition. Indeed, we are not sure that the latter gifts are not a snare to their possessor. Professor Müller is nothing if not picturesque, and even brilliant. But impassioned rhetoric sometimes conceals, we do not say is meant to conceal, serious gaps in the argument.

I. Let us, in the first place, gather up a few of the incidental services already rendered by religious science to Christian faith.

It has put the crown on the argument for the unity of the human race. That unity was once disputed, in order to make a point against Scripture. It is curious how scepticism has completely faced about on this subject, and is now just as anxious to build up as it was once to destroy, in order to turn the fact of unity against religion. We accept the argument apart from the purpose. To the physical evidence is now added the more cogent evidence from language and religion. These belong not to the surface of human nature, but to that which is deepest and imperishable. If in this region any real con-

tradiction had come to light, we know to what use it would have been put. But there is no such contradiction. Deeper than the diversity is the unity.

This science has also established the fact of the universality of religion. This fact was once questioned. It was asserted that tribes had been found which showed no trace of religion. No one asserts this now. Even so thorough-going a religious evolutionist as Professor Tiele, of Leyden, says: "The statement that there are nations or tribes which possess no religion rests either on inaccurate observation or confusion of ideas. No tribe or nation has yet been met with destitute of belief in any higher beings; and travellers who asserted their existence have been afterwards refuted by facts. It is legitimate, therefore, to call religion in its most general sense a universal phenomenon of humanity." Professor Müller writes: "We may safely say that, in spite of all researches, no human beings have been found anywhere who do not possess something which to them is religion, or, to put it in the most general form, a belief in something beyond what they can see with their eyes" (Hibbert Lecture, p. 79). All the alleged exceptions have been shown to be no exceptions, at least among the savage nations, where they have been diligently sought. We are sometimes reminded that in Buddhism, which is the religion of nearly a third of the human race, we have an example of a religion with a high code of morality, and yet without a god. But it is only in theory that Buddhism is atheistic. In practice Buddha himself has been installed on the empty throne of Deity.* There are exceptions to the universality of religion, but they are to be found in the heart of Christian civilisation. In spite of all efforts to

* See Note 1.

make Agnostics and Materialists religious against their will, we must hold that when a writer asks, "Have we still a Religion?" and answers in the negative; when another repudiates religion on the ground that it is rooted in selfishness; when we hear another declaring that poetry is the only religion left to the educated; when we see another, "after declaring both God and gods obsolete, falling down before a beloved memory," we see no reason for refusing to accept the disclaimer. But surely, in this case as in others, the saying holds good, that the exceptions prove the rule. Blindness is the exception, vision is the rule. There would be no blindness if there were no vision. Disease and suffering are the exceptions, sound health is the rule. Faith is natural, scepticism artificial. Whatever consequences the universality of religion carries with it, their full benefit belongs to the Christian believer.

Another valuable service rendered by this science is the evidence it has brought against the notion that all religion originated in Fetishism. This notion is a main pillar of the Comtist explanation of religion. Just as, according to some, the highest bodily forms are the outgrowth of the animal, so the purest devotion and sanctity that ever beautified human character have sprung from the worship of a fetish. It is refreshing to hear the heavy blows dealt by Professor Müller at this most irrational of monstrosities. In the lecture which he devotes to the subject, he shows that even at the stage of Fetishism there are many degrees of better and worse, and that higher notions are to be found mixed up with the most abject superstitions, like fading reminiscences of better days. A story is told of a negro who, when reproached for worshipping a tree, replied: "Oh, the

tree is not the fetish; the fetish is a spirit and invisible, but he has descended into the tree. Certainly he cannot devour our bodily food, but he enjoys its spiritual part, and leaves behind the bodily part which we see" (*Ibid.*, p. 101). Now here the notion of an invisible power existed alongside the most degrading worship. Professor Müller evidently leans to the view, which Christians generally hold, that Fetishism represents not the first step in religious development, but the last step in religious declension. Everything points to this conclusion. Look at the tribes of Fetishists in Africa. Is it credible that at this period in the history of the world they have got no farther than the alphabet in religion, that for untold centuries they have stood still while the rest of the world has been moving forward? Is not their present condition more intelligible on the theory of its being the lowest stage in a process of declension? We simply quote Professor Müller's conclusions, omitting the arguments and evidence by which they are supported. He says: "I maintain that Fetishism was a corruption of religion in Africa as elsewhere; that the negro is capable of higher religious ideas than the worship of stocks and stones, and that many tribes who believe in fetishes, cherish at the same time very pure, very true, very exalted sentiments of the Deity" (p. 105). And again, "We are justified therefore, I think, in surrendering the theory that Fetishism either has been or must have been the beginning of all religion" (p. 127). To have shown good cause against this ugly theory is surely no unimportant service.

II. But these are only minor points. The chief service which we believe this science is destined to render to Christian faith is the negative proof it affords of the necessity of

special revelation in order to clear and satisfactory knowledge of the great objects of faith. The history of religion outside the sphere of Christian revelation is the history of sincere and strenuous but vain effort on the part of man to construct a religion satisfactory to reason and conscience; in other words, it is a history of mistake and error. Men sought the Lord, "if haply they might feel after him and find him," with but one result—they never found Him.

We have already intimated that one school of writers on this subject rejects the idea of special revelation altogether, and seeks to bring Christianity itself under the law of natural evolution. We are very far from charging such a design upon our English teachers, although much which they have written seems to look in this direction. But there can be no doubt that as regards India Professor Müller is a thorough evolutionist. He thinks that the notion of a primeval revelation is unnecessary to explain the phenomena which meet us in this field, and by inference in every similar field. The theory is that religion may grow out of the soil of human nature apart from the aid of specific revelation, external or internal, and India is taken as an illustration, a test-case. We accept the test. We think that an examination will show that the explanation breaks down, that there are phenomena which it does not cover, and that, even accepting the theory as it stands, the course which religion has taken in India proves the necessity of special revelation. Perhaps it will be best to indicate at once the two principal points on which we are compelled to differ from the evolution theory in its application to India.

The first concerns the way in which the necessary postulate of this theory is obtained. This postulate is the idea of the

infinite, or supernatural, or divine. Give us this, it is said, and out of it we will bring all that India has thought and believed on the subject of religion. Out of this germ come Vêdas and Purânas, Polytheism and Pantheism, the refinements of Hindu philosophy and the extravagances of Hindu mythology. Just as some scientists evolve the whole physical universe out of a primitive monad, just as Schleiermacher finds the fountain-head of religion in the feeling of absolute dependence, so our author says: 'Give me the consciousness, the presentiment in man of the existence of an infinite something, and out of this I will construct every non-Christian religion.' And how does he obtain this presentiment? Let the answer be carefully marked, From the senses. It is the senses which perceive the infinite. Of course it is not meant that the infinite or divine is just as obvious as the sun and stars. This would be very much like the direct intuition which is strongly repudiated. The meaning is that the least reflection will show that the infinite is involved in the knowledge which the senses give us. A great deal indeed of what is said on the point would bear the construction that all that is meant is the existence of a capacity in man for apprehending the infinite; but even this, we should contend, lies not in the senses but in the reason. At first sight we think we must have mistaken the meaning, and that the reference must be to the senses in conjunction with the reason—the senses supplying the material out of which reason elaborates the higher idea. But we are assured again and again that this is not the meaning. Indeed, it cannot be the meaning for several reasons. The position that the reason by working upon the materials supplied by the senses may arrive at a conception of the infinite is a very old and common

doctrine. There was no need to devote a whole lecture to enforce what none but a Materialist would be disposed to deny. But observe that in this case it is not sense which gives us the idea but reason, which merely uses sense as an instrument. But this would blunt the very point of our author's argument. He is here arguing against the Positivists, without naming them. The Positivist will admit no evidence but that of the senses. He will not allow that reason can ever be an independent source of knowledge, or give us anything not already involved in sense-knowledge. Professor Müller accepts this ground of argument, and says in effect, 'On your own premisses, accepting nothing but your own data, I will show you that faith in the infinite is a necessity.'* Put briefly, he not only accepts to the full the old dictum, "There is nothing in the intelligence which did not exist previously in the senses," ignoring even Leibnitz's addition, "Except the intelligence itself," but adds, "There is nothing in religion which did not exist previously in the senses."

What are we to say of this theory? We could almost wish it were true. It would save us a world of trouble. It would be a great convenience if we had nothing to do but to say to the sceptic, 'Use your senses. Look at, hear, touch the infinite for yourselves.' But what if the sceptic turns round and says, as he will say, 'I have used my senses, and they give me no such information as you promise'? How will you establish your assertion? You cannot do it by the senses themselves. You can only do it by falling back upon those means of proof which you have given up. No, much as we approve both the motive and the conclusion of the argument, we cannot admit

* See Note 2.

the cogency of the mode of proof. We must not even believe truth on false grounds. The theory is no doubt original, but its very originality excites suspicion. Strange that men should have sought far and wide, high and low, for that which after all lay within the grasp of the five senses. But the argument will not bear examination. It confounds the indefinite with the infinite. The indefinite, which hems in the sphere of sense-perception at every point, may be regarded as an analogue of the infinite, but it is not the infinite. It is nothing but the finite indefinitely prolonged. The finite, apart from rational inquiry into its cause, can never give us anything but a repetition of itself, *i.e.*, the finite. It is a contradiction that sense should ever transcend itself. We may as well say that a man can climb on his own head. The whole theory is a transference of the results of reason to the province of the senses, which are made to do what they were never intended to do and have no power to do. We might just as well confound the functions of the senses, and make sight do the work of hearing, and so on. Sense and reason have each their own province. Neither can take the place of the other.*

If, then, the way in which our author makes man arrive at a knowledge of the infinite were essential to his argument, we must hold that the argument breaks down at the first step. But it is not essential. We quite admit the conclusion, though we reject the reasons here assigned for it. That is, we see no reason to doubt that man might, independently of special revelation, arrive at some knowledge of God. Whether, as matter of fact, he has ever done so, whether the means for doing so are intuition or reasoning, or both, we

* See Note 3.

need not here consider. We simply state the fact. Place a man in front of the universe, give him the unfettered use of his senses and reason, and there will inevitably grow up within him the thought of a higher power behind the veil of the material. Scripture nowhere asserts, much less proves, but simply assumes the existence of God. Special revelation is necessary, not to give knowledge of God, but to give distinct, certain, trustworthy knowledge; to correct and guard against error on this most vital subject. This is clearly the teaching of St. Paul when, addressing a heathen audience, he says that "God left not Himself without witness;" and again when he says that "the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead," and that the heathen "having not the law are a law unto themselves."

Although somewhat of a digression, we may be allowed to indicate what seems to be the right attitude to the Positivist position on this subject. The right course to pursue, as it seems to us, is not to concede that position and try to argue from it, but to show its thoroughly illegitimate and arbitrary character. If you accept sceptical premisses you cannot escape the sceptical conclusion. It is of no use trying to prove a case when the very means of proof are interdicted. You might as well forbid the astronomer to use his formulæ, the chemist to resort to experiment, the historian to appeal to written testimony, the barrister to call his witnesses, and then bid them prove their case. The Positivist knows very well that if he lays an interdict on reason, an interdict as thoroughly arbitrary as any issued in the past by Popes of Rome, if he makes it the slave instead of the lord of the

senses, he forecloses the path to religion, and for this very reason he arbitrarily interdicts it. Arbitrarily, we say: for all the reasons we ever yet heard for the course amount to this, that if you admit an appeal to anything outside or above the senses even in man, religion becomes inevitable. To close the mouth of the witnesses on the other side is no doubt an easy way of gaining your case, but at least you must show cause for doing so. This is not done in the present case. It has never yet been established that reason is not just as integral a part of human nature as the senses, not just as trustworthy in its action, not just as much or as little liable to mistake. How do I know that there are such things as a mind or soul, causal power, substance, force of gravitation, or the like? These are not objects of sense, but inferences of reason from facts of sense. The Positivist denies all these, as he is bound to do by the law of consistency, but the very fact of his being obliged to do so, and to reduce the whole universe to matter and force, is refutation enough of his fundamental principles. According to him man is essentially a seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching animal, for the higher faculties are all derived from the lower. Sense is supreme; reason, instead of being queen, is a helpless slave. The world's greatest thinkers have all been deceived as to what constitutes the essence and crown and glory of human nature. Let those believe this who can. But those who do believe it have small reason to reproach others with credulity. Can any one doubt that if the infinite had been an object of sense, we should have heard the same arguments against the authority of the senses that we now hear against reason, and on as good grounds?

III. But granting the possibility of arriving at some know-

ledge of God by the light of reason, are all the contents of the Hindu religion, as is asserted, such as might conceivably be attained in this way? We think not. We think that there are elements which point to a higher source, and are best explained by, if they do not absolutely require, the primeval revelation which we are forbidden to assume.

We take the Vêdic teaching as the earliest accessible form of Indian faith. We have no space to dwell on the general character of the Vêdas, nor is there any need, as Professor Müller's ample and graphic descriptions are readily accessible. Let it suffice to say that the earliest part of the Vêdas may be assigned to at least 1000 B.C., and the latest to 500 B.C. The system of the earlier portion is one of polytheistic nature-worship, nothing higher and nothing lower. There are no divine incarnations or human deifications. Look round the Vêdic Pantheon. You do not see there one of the deities of modern India. First and chief is the Sun with a different name for each different aspect—Sûrya, the Shining One; Pûshan, the Nourisher; Savitri, the Life-giver, and so on. Varuna, the Greek *οὐρανός*, the all-embracing sky, is a considerable deity. There is Indra, the god of rain and thunder; Prithivi, the Earth; Agni (Latin *ignis*), Fire; Vâyu, Wind; Ushas, the Dawn; and many others. If we were to quote hymns and prayers page after page, they would simply show that the Vêdic religion in its earliest form is worship of the powers of nature. But while this is its ruling character, there are other elements of an altogether different order. Professor Müller has insisted very strongly that in the Vêda the ideas of sin, guilt, sacrifice, forgiveness, personal immortality, are all found, although it may be observed incarnation is not of the number.

It is true that they form far too small a portion of the whole to exert any appreciable influence; they are lost in the multitude of details of an entirely different kind. But we confess that to us these higher moral ideas are among the most interesting features of those ancient writings, for they reveal the workings of conscience, a sense of spiritual need, and prove that within man, as well as without, God did not leave Himself without witness. Amid prayers for food and health and victory, it is startling to come upon such prayers as the following: "We pray to the rivers, the mothers, and to the grassy mountains, to the sun and the dawn, to keep us from guilt" (p. 201). Some of the prayers sound like echoes of other words familiar to Christian ears: "1. Let me not yet, O Varuna, enter into the house of clay; have mercy, Almighty, have mercy. 2. If I go along trembling, like a cloud driven by the wind; have mercy, Almighty, have mercy. 3. Through want of strength, thou bright and strong God, have I gone wrong; have mercy, Almighty, have mercy. 4. Thirst came upon the worshipper, though he stood in the midst of the waters; have mercy, Almighty, have mercy. 5. Whenever we men, O Varuna, commit an offence before the heavenly host; whenever we break the law through thoughtlessness; have mercy, Almighty, have mercy." With the question of Micah, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?" compare "How can I get unto Varuna? Will he accept my offering without displeasure? When shall I, with a quiet mind, see him propitiated? I ask, O Varuna, wishing to know this my sin. I go to ask the wise. The sages all tell me the same, Varuna it is who is displeased with thee." A hymn to Prajâpati, Lord of all creatures, consisting of ten verses, closes each

verse with the refrain, "Who is the God to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?" Lest these quotations should give the impression that they represent the general tone of the Vêdic hymns, we repeat that they are exceptional, and that the prevailing character is what might be expected in a system of nature-worship. The fact is, that confessions of sin, petitions for mercy, ideas of sacrifice, are out of place in such a system. They belong to another circle of thought. What have rivers, grassy mountains, the sun and dawn to do with keeping man from guilt? Our author may well say, "The first prayer that sounds really strange to us is when they are implored to keep us from guilt." Do not these elements look like an importation from a system of an altogether different nature and with different associations? Observe, these ideas are not put to any further use. They are not made to harmonise with their surroundings. They do not become the basis of any further development in the Vêdic circle. There they hang, unconnected with anything about them. As far as we know, such ideas as those of sacrifice, propitiation, forgiveness, have never been regarded as belonging to a system of simple nature-worship. Even in modern days they have always been repudiated by those who content themselves with what is called natural religion. These ideas do indeed reappear at later stages, where they are made the centre of elaborate rituals; but there they are plainly borrowed from early days. What we have to do with now is their presence in these earliest records, where they are so thoroughly out of keeping with the ruling spirit of the system. They are evidently a difficulty to our author, who does not attempt an explanation, but passes them by with the casual remark, that "individual genius frequently anticipates by

centuries the slow and steady advance of the main body of the great army for the conquest of truth." To attribute anything to genius is very much like attributing it to instinct, or chance, or nothing, *i.e.*, it is a giving up of the problem.

The theory of a primitive revelation explains the presence of these foreign elements, and nothing else does. Here these ideas are seen to be at home and find their adjustment. The Vêdas do not profess to be original works. They are arranged in divisions called Samhitâs, Collections. Thus, on their very face, they are merely collections of opinions and beliefs previously current. The period anterior to the Vêdas is a region of conjecture. That is the most probable explanation which covers all the facts. The theory of natural evolution does not cover all the facts. The appearance of this circle of ideas at such an early stage is a difficulty which it cannot get over. The supposition of a primeval revelation, whatever hard words may be used about it, does cover all the facts. These ideas are seen to be relics of a vanishing revelation, held mechanically, without any comprehension of their meaning and use. Granting that this is nothing but hypothesis, the opposite theory is no more.

IV. Our main argument still remains. The difference between our position and that of Professor Müller in a practical point of view is not as great as at first sight it might appear. He maintains that the Hindus were from the first left to the light of reason and nature. We allow that they were so left from the time when they broke with the original divine revelation, and that time goes back far beyond the earliest dawn of history. While we believe that their creed, as soon as it becomes known to us, includes some traditional elements of revelation, we deeply feel that these

elements are a very inconsiderable portion of the whole, and exerted the least possible influence on Hindu faith. Without interpreter or key, they fell more and more into the background before the inventions of man. Thus, practically, the Hindus were left to find their own way to God, to make a religion for themselves from the materials supplied by nature. And Hinduism is substantially the result of this process. We have in India a specimen of what unaided human reason could effect in the discovery of religious truth. What is the result? The science of religion gives the answer. There may be difference of opinion respecting the process and the value of the result; but as to what the result is, there is, there can be no difference of opinion.

The result may be stated in a single sentence. You have in the Vêdas polytheistic nature-worship at the beginning and pantheism at the end. We leave out of sight later forms of Hinduism, because these supply nothing additional, but are simply reproductions of the essential parts of Vêdic teaching. As far as the Vêdas are concerned, with the exception of germs of monotheism which always remained germs, they contain nothing but polytheistic nature-worship and philosophical pantheism. The combination of two such opposite elements in the same professed revelation has scarcely received the notice it deserves.

Hinduism began, as every other heathen religion began, as the Greek, German, Persian religions began, with worship of the forces of nature. Whether this was really the beginning or not, whether a purer idea of God had existed before or not, is here immaterial. Nor again does it concern us much how nature-worship grew up. Professor Müller proposes an ingenious sliding-scale of semi-tangible objects, such as trees,

mountains, rivers, the earth; and intangible objects, such as the sky, stars, sun, &c., by which as by a ladder the Hindus may have risen to the worship of the Divine. This may be so or not. On the basis of purely natural evolution it would be enough to suppose in general that men reasoned from themselves to the world; in short, personified natural objects. How this was done in language has been often shown. A river was called a runner, a plougher, mother, defender, shouter. A stone was called a cutter, the heel a kicker, the moon a measurer, the plough a tearer, the ship a flier, and so on. So men surmised powers or beings like themselves acting behind the great movements of creation. But we have only here to do with the result, not with the process. Nor again do we need to discuss the new term by which Professor Müller would designate the early Vêdic stage of worship—Kathenotheism, which he prefers to polytheism, as marking the stage at which the worshipper regards the deity he is worshipping at the moment as supreme. The distinction between the two seems to us greater than the difference. Although the worshipper, while he is worshipping Varuna, speaks as if he believed Varuna to be supreme, yet if he is ready the next moment to say the same of Sûrya, is he not a polytheist? He simply prays to different deities for different blessings. Kathenotheism is in fact a form of polytheism. But these are secondary points. The cardinal fact to be seized is that the first form of Vêdic worship is nature-worship of a very complete and elaborate kind. As to this fact there is no dispute.

And there is just as little dispute as to the pantheism contained in the latter part of the Vêdas. Vêdânta is composed of two words, which mean *End of the Vêda*, and pantheism being the doctrine taught at the end of the Vêda, Vêdântism

has come to be synonymous with pantheism, and Vêdântist with pantheist. Vêdântism is the favourite school of Indian philosophy. The bias of the Hindu mind is all towards it. Indian pantheism is the most systematic, the most elaborate and pervasive, that the world has ever seen, shrinking from no consequences, but pushing its logic to the utmost extreme. The great cleavage of Hindu speculation is into Dwaitism, *dualism*, and Adwaitism, *non-dualism*. A Dwaiti is one who believes in the distinction of creating and created. An Adwaiti is one who holds the essential oneness of the two. He holds that the distinction is only in appearance and for a time, and that all separate existences are merely phenomena of the one essentially changeless substance. We do not say that Adwaitism or pantheism underlies all Hinduism. There may be sects or castes which hold the eternity of the distinction between the two orders of being. But it underlies the greater part of Hinduism. There are sects which are dualist in profession and yet hold non-dualism in the ultimate result, as a sort of esoteric doctrine. A Vishnuite Brahman will tell you that, while he acknowledges Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, and all the other deities, these are merely temporary manifestations of the One supreme, only Being; that after they have measured their vast cycles of existence they will all be resolved back into the depths of the one sole existence from which they sprang.

Now what we wish to point out is that this universal pantheism of India, implicit or expressed, appeals to the Vêda as its authority, and justly so. There is no need to prove or illustrate at length what every one admits. The Upanishads, or closing treatises of the Vêdas, are steeped in pantheism. One of them says, "Whoever looks for this

world, for the gods, for all beings, for this universe, elsewhere than in the divine Spirit, should be abandoned by them all. This Brahmahood, this Kshatra power, this world, these gods, these beings, this universe,—are all the divine Spirit" (Müller, *Hist. of Anc. Sanscrit Literature*, p. 23). The universe is said to rise out of God as sounds out of a drum or lute, smoke out of fire, vapour out of the sea. As salt dissolves in water, so the finite merges in the divine. The two Hindu names for the supreme, sole existence are Brahman, the objective self, and Atman, the spirit or subjective self, which eventually become one. Atman means *breath*, then *spirit*, then *self*, and is a favourite name for the absolute self of the universe, just as in these days we hear of the absolute Ego. Professor Müller says: "It was used to express not simply the *Ego* or the I, for that *Ego*, the *Aham*, the I, was too much made up of the fleeting elements of this life. No, it expressed what was beyond the Ego, what supported the Ego for a time, but after a time freed itself from the fetters and conditions of the human Ego, and became again the pure self." And again, "The key-note of the old Upanishads is 'know thyself,' but with a much deeper meaning than that of the *Γνῶθι σεαυτόν* of the Delphic oracle. The 'know thyself' of the Upanishads means, know thy true self, that which underlies thine Ego, and find it and know it in the highest, the eternal Self, the One without a Second, which underlies the whole world. This was the final solution of the search after the Infinite, the Invisible, the Unknown, the Divine, a search begun in the simplest hymns of the Vêda, and ended in the Upanishads, or as they were afterwards called the Vêdânta, the end or the highest object of the Vêda" (Hibb., pp. 314, 318). Again

and again it is declared in the Vêdânta that Brahma is both maker and matter, he is to the universe what yarn is to cloth, what milk to curds, what earth to a jar, what gold to a bracelet. The Vêdântist creed is summed up in two words, Ekamêv adwitîyam, One without a second. Another saying of the Upanishads is, Brahma satyam, jagan mithyâ, jîvo Brahmaiva nâparah, "Brahma is true, the universe false, the soul is Brahma, there is no other" (Williams, *Indian Wisdom*, p. 113). The goal of all knowledge is the ability to say, Tat twam asi, "Thou art that," *i.e.* "Thou art identical with that, meaning Brahma" (Colebroke, *Essays*, i. 30). Here is another extract from the Upanishads. "Where there is anything like duality there one sees another, one smells another, one tastes another, one speaks to another, one hears another, one minds another, one regards another, one knows another. But where the whole is one spirit, whom and by what can one see? whom and by what can one smell? whom and by what can one taste? to whom and by what can one speak? whom and by what can one hear? whom and by what one mind? whom and by what can one regard?" (Williams, *ut supra*). Such is the pantheism of the Vêdas.

These are the only definite doctrines respecting God which the Vêda knows. The polytheist can appeal to it, the pantheist can appeal to it, but no one else. The deities of modern India have no place in it. They come from the Purânas, much more recent productions, which remind us of nothing so much as of Gnostic cosmogonies on a vast scale, and which cannot pretend to a tithe of the authority belonging to the Vêda. The modern theist of Calcutta professes to appeal to the Vêda, but he brings his theism to it. The

place of theism, or monotheism, in India is anterior to the Vêdic age, not during its course or afterwards. The only elements of theism in the Vêda are vanishing relics, which soon entirely disappear. My own conviction is that the amount of religious truth to be found in the Vêdas has been greatly exaggerated. In this case, as in many others, readers find what they bring. Much of course must be allowed to the enthusiasm excited by the discovery of the new world opened in Vêdic literature. But calm reflection will show that the strongest statements in the Vêdas respecting the divine unity are vague. They cannot compare with the clear enunciations, on the other side, of polytheism and pantheism. As far as definite teaching goes, these two doctrines divide between them the whole area of Hinduism,—one the creed of the masses,—the other the creed, though often held esoterically, of the educated and philosophical. And observe that even if monotheism could be shown to be an integral element of Vêdic teaching, it would but increase the confusion and contradiction. Surely it is contradiction enough that the same sacred books should teach doctrines so mutually exclusive as polytheistic and pantheistic theories of the divine nature.

To the truth of this representation we summon Professor Müller as a witness, although we are sorry to find that at this point his language, usually so transparent, becomes strangely ambiguous. He sums up the stages of Hindu faith as Kathenotheism, Polytheism, Monotheism, and Atheism. Kathenotheism we may dismiss, as it is simply incipient polytheism. Atheism also should be struck out; for, although it has no doubt existed as an opinion in the schools, it has never taken root in Indian soil, and certainly does

not deserve to rank as a stage in the religious life of the country. We have now two phases left—Polytheism and Monotheism. But what is meant by monotheism in India? I confess that I was startled beyond measure on first seeing the word in the heading of the chapter. What, I asked myself, after living some years in India, and doing what I could to understand the people, have I been all the while deceived? Is there monotheism, was there ever monotheism, in that country? I turned eagerly to the chapter, but found no reference to the monotheism mentioned in the heading. Then another surprise started up. In the whole volume, text and index, the word pantheism is not to be found. What, I said, deceived again? No pantheism in India! You may as well say there are no castes in India, no idols in the temples, no genius and poetry and philosophy in the ancient books. It is about you everywhere. You hear it, feel it, breathe it. The Hindus would thoroughly sympathise with the pantheistic sentiment breathing in so many of Wordsworth's lines, as where he speaks of—

> "A sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
> A motion and a spirit that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things."

And yet pantheism is not so much as mentioned in our author's account of Hinduism; but you will have divined the explanation. Professor Müller's monotheism is Indian pantheism. Well, if pantheism is monotheism, as it no doubt is in a sense, India is certainly monotheistic, and long has been. But if Hindus are monotheists, we are not. Of course there

is no such property in words as in land. If I choose to call low what you call high, and to say "Yes" when you say "No," there is no law to prevent me. But it is not convenient to do so without giving notice of the change. We cannot but look upon the term as unfortunate, and, although not intentionally, misleading to general readers. Le Page Renouf, in the second series of *Hibbert Lectures*, speaks far more clearly, ascribing to the religion of ancient Egypt but three stages—Henotheism, Pantheism, Materialism. However, although in an ambiguous way, Professor Müller, or rather the science of religion through him, testifies that the Hindu religion has known but two stages—Polytheism and Pantheism.

This position may need some further explanation and defence. We are far from denying that monotheistic tendencies are to be found in the Vêdas, as they are to be found in India now. But these tendencies never took definite shape, or acquired practical influence. Just at the point where monotheism should have emerged, pantheism emerged instead. Pantheism, and not monotheism, was the Indian solution of the problem of the universe. Even on the supposition that India was, from the first, under a law of simple evolution, this is what evolution led to. Can any one regard it as satisfactory? On any theory is not India a demonstration of the insufficiency of human reason left to itself, and of the necessity of higher revelation? How little monotheism there is in the Vêdas we have seen. That there has been any since no one will contend. In India to-day you have a more extreme polytheism and a more logical pantheism, both of them developments of Vêdic teaching. Plato and Aristotle held far more definite language respecting the unity of the

First Cause than any Indian thinker. But do we on that account speak of the monotheism of ancient Greece? Would it not be misleading to rank this among the stages of Greek religious life? There are altars to the Unknown God. Where are the altars to the One God? Monotheism, as we understand it, is essentially intolerant of rivalry. It cannot fraternise with polytheism. The jealousy of the Decalogue burns in it. Are these views in Greece or India, which were consistent with polytheistic practices, rightly called monotheism? Professor Müller is far truer to fact when he speaks of a "tendency towards monotheism" (p. 292). Tendency? Yes, but tendency towards a thing is not the thing itself. He presently goes on to show that the tendency never issued in anything definite. Even the lonely supremacy of the Western Jupiter never had a parallel in India, at least in Vêdic days. The only unity Hinduism ever reached, if unity it may be called, is that of pantheism. Our author says very truly: "With the Greeks and Romans and Germans we know that their ancient gods, when their course was run, either disappeared altogether, or, if their existence could not be entirely annihilated, they were degraded into evil and mischievous spirits; while there was, at the same time, a new religion, namely, Christianity, ready at hand, and capable of supplying those cravings of the heart which can never be entirely suppressed. In India there was no such religion coming, as it were, from the outside, in which the Brahmans, after they had lost their old gods and protectors, could have taken refuge." We are quite unable to reconcile such language with the ascription of a monotheistic stage to Indian life, except, of course, on the supposition that pantheism is alled by this name. In his last pages Professor Müller does

indeed speak as if the distinction between Creator and created is permanent in Indian faith. He says, "And yet they did not believe in the annihilation of their own Self." But we do not see how this can be made to agree with the teaching of the Vêdic Upanishads. If pantheism of the most definite type is taught anywhere, it is taught in those treatises.*

Now, here is a people, acute if any were ever acute, religious if any were ever religious, age after age giving to the study of the mysteries of existence the energy which other peoples gave to material conquests, and what is the outcome? Polytheism and Pantheism. The seekers only burst through the iron bars of sense to plunge sheer down into the abyss of universal being. They never rose to the simple and sublime conception of one living and true God, Maker of heaven and earth, but, because its Maker, distinct from it. They never succeeded in disentangling the spiritual from the material, the infinite from the finite, the Creator from the creature. Religious history in India, as elsewhere, is a history of declension; for we hold that pantheism, while an advance on polytheism intellectually, is no advance morally and religiously, but the opposite. If any people could have succeeded in finding God, apart from the aid of revelation, we should have expected the Hindus to do so. Where they failed who is likely to succeed? Did it fare better with the Chinese, Persians, Egyptians, Greeks, Romans? We know that it fared worse. Their religions will not compare for consistency, depth, and thoroughness with the Indian. Does not such a failure amount as nearly as possible to a demonstration of the inability of man, in his

* See Note 4.

present state, and with his present powers, to arrive at clear and certain conceptions of the nature of God?*

By way of contrast let us turn to Old Testament teaching. Here we are in quite a different world. Here from the first the grand central truth of the unity of God stands out in sharp definition. We say, from the first, for in this feature lies the very pith of the contrast. Here is no wavering, no feeling after God, no searching for the truth, no progress in its discovery; for, great as was the progress as respects the contents of the doctrine of God, that is, as respects knowledge of the divine character and will, on the single point of the divine unity there was no progress from the first page of revelation to the last. The very first verse of Scripture enunciates a doctrine of the divine unity as clear and full as that we hold; in fact, the same. In the words, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," the unity of God, His distinctness from nature, and His personality, are all plainly implied. When we remember that the book of Genesis was at least contemporaneous with the Vêdas, and probably earlier, we must feel that the contrast between the two on this fundamental point is unique. And we know how subsequently Israel stood forth before the world as the witness and guardian of the doctrine of the divine unity; how the history of the doctrine and the history of the people were interwoven. This is the fact, guaranteed by the science of religion; for, as to the theories about the development of Jewish faith in the divine unity out of a pre-existent polytheism, they are mere unproved speculations. No unbiassed person can read the fantastic theories put forward respecting the "Mythology of the Hebrews" without coming to the

* See Note 5.

conclusion that the age of myth-making is not yet past, and that the true mythologists are these modern theorisers. Here is the fact. What is the explanation? Only three explanations are conceivable.

We may suppose that the Jews discovered this truth for themselves by their own force of genius. And this seems to be the notion of some, who speak of the genius of the Jews for the discovery of religious truth. But, as already intimated, genius is a vague term, and is rather a substitute for an explanation than an explanation. How is it that the Jews never displayed special genius in any other intellectual field? To suppose that a people of no philosophical aptitude made a discovery which such nations as the Greeks and Hindus failed to do would be to believe, not in an intellectual miracle—for in the case of miracle an adequate cause is assigned—but in an intellectual contradiction or impossibility. No one knows this better than M. Renan. He says: "Apart from superiority in religion, the Jewish people had superiority of no other kind. Of all the nations of antiquity they are the least gifted in science and philosophy. They have no great political or military position. Their institutions are purely conservative. The prophets, who well represent their genius, are essentially men of the past (?), with their faces always turned to a former ideal. How explain, in a society so contracted and so little developed, a revolution of ideas such as Athens and Alexandria failed to accomplish?" He therefore rightly rejects this explanation.

But M. Renan's own explanation is just as little satisfactory. He attributes the Jewish doctrine to a *monotheistic tendency* in the Semitic nature. A mere tendency, unsupported by evidence, is just as poor an explanation as genius. And

where is the evidence of such a tendency? Is it to be found among the old Egyptians, Arabs, Babylonians, Assyrians, Phœnicians, all belonging to the Semitic line? On the contrary, these were one and all idolaters of the grossest kind, and on the most colossal scale. Not one of these nations worked its way out of idolatry, except the Arabs, long after the Christian era, under the influence of Mohammedanism. Professor Müller well says that if we transfer the word instinct from animal to rational life, we simply use a word to avoid a definition. "It may sound more scientific to speak of a monotheistic instinct rather than of the inborn image, or the revealed truth of the one living God; but is instinct less mysterious than revelation? Can there be an instinct without an instigation or an instigator? And whose hand was it that instigated the Semitic mind to the worship of one God? Could the same hand instigate the Aryan mind to the worship of many gods?" (*Chips*, i. 351). We have no objection to admit this monotheistic instinct in the Semitic character, if it can be proved by evidence, because even then we should require a cause for the instinct. What we object to is pure hypothesis. What we object to is an instinct, the only evidence of which is that very Jewish monotheism which it is called in to explain. Why, there was no such instinct even in the Jews. Their frequent relapses into idolatry prove that they were made of the same material as their Semitic brethren, and that, if they had been left to themselves, they would have followed the same course.

The other explanation is that of divine revelation, and it is the only satisfactory one. Even Professor Müller feels himself shut up to this conclusion. In an earlier essay on "Semitic Monotheism" (*Chips*, Vol. I.) he derives the first

knowledge of God, not from the operation of the senses, as in the later work, but from a primitive, innate intuition in human nature. We need not dwell on his theory to the effect that this intuition simply included the general notion of God, without reference to the question of one god or many, and that the polytheism of the Aryan peoples was a sort of trick played upon them by the peculiar structure of their language, while the Semitic tongues favoured a monotheistic tendency. We are not quite sure that M. Renan would not, after all, claim Professor Müller as a follower. However, consistently or not, nothing can be clearer than the language of the latter. He says: "If we are asked how Abraham possessed not only the primitive intuition of God as He had revealed Himself to all mankind, but passed through the denial of all other gods to the knowledge of the one God, we are content to answer that it was by a special divine revelation. We do not indulge in theological phraseology, but we mean every word to its fullest extent. The Father of truth chooses His own prophets, and He speaks to them in a voice stronger than the voice of thunder. A divine instinct may sound more scientific and less theological, but in truth it would neither be an appropriate name for what is a gift or grace accorded to but few, nor would it be a more scientific, *i.e.*, a more intelligible word than special revelation. The important point, however, is not whether the faith of Abraham should be called a divine instinct, or a revelation; what we wish here to insist on is, that that instinct, or revelation, was special, granted to one man, and handed down from him to Jews, Christians, and Mohammedans, to all who believe in the God of Abraham" (p. 373).

We have only touched on a single point in the domain of

religious knowledge, albeit a fundamental one. We have said nothing of the doctrine of the divine nature, and especially its moral attributes; nothing of immortality, the moral law, sin, sacrifice, incarnation, and all the other great ideas belonging to the same domain. On these subjects far more powerful arguments might be raised. The contrast drawn between Christianity and Hinduism, on a single point, might be carried round the whole circle. And what has been said of India might be said, and no doubt will be said, of other countries. We have simply tried to show how the researches going on in this new field will eventually tell in favour of Christian truth. Nor, although we have made frequent reference to the first series of *Hibbert Lectures*, has it been our object to criticise those Lectures as a whole. If it had been, we should have had something to say of the strange half-hope, half-prophecy, with which the Lecturer concludes, of a "Church of the Future," in which Hindu, Buddhist, Mohammedan, Jew, and Christian are to feel equally at home; the Hindu having been persuaded, by some unexplained agency, to leave behind everything but his firm faith in the invisible, the Buddhist everything but his passive resignation, the Mohammedan everything but his sobriety, the Jew everything but his faith in one God, the Christian everything but one word—love. And we should have had still more to say of the radical fallacy running through the Lectures, that all ideas, even the moral and spiritual, are derived from the senses.* The Lecturer here confounds ideas with their names. That the names we give to objects in the spiritual world are derived from the material, we admit. And there are no better illustrations of the process by which these words

* See Note 6.

gradually lose their old material associations than those given by Professor Müller. But that those ideas themselves have a material origin, we altogether deny. Take the words *spirit* and *inspiration*. In most languages, both Semitic and Aryan, the name for the spirit is taken from *breath*, a material object. But did those who first used this name think of the spirit in man as mere breath? If they did, why create a new distinction? Must not the new idea have existed before it was named, just as the material object existed before it was named? They evidently contemplated that within them which thought and felt, which loved and feared, as *like* breath in some respect, but, because *like* breath, *not* breath. Why spiritual things borrowed their names from physical is obvious. Physical things lay nearest, struck the attention first, and were first distinguished from each other. The spiritual world was only discovered and mapped out by degrees. "That was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual." Take as another illustration the Hebrew word for glory or honour, *Kabôd*, which means originally *weight*. Did the idea of honour or glory arise from weight? How could it? What relation is there between the two? How could weight suggest glory? Is it not evident that the Hebrews, having the idea of glory or honour, and looking about in the material world for something by which to characterise its essence, were most struck by the thought of the *burden* or *weight* of responsibility attaching to honour, and named it accordingly? Before one thing can be named after another, they must be compared, and before they can be compared they must exist. To borrow names for spiritual objects from the material world is one thing, to derive the spiritual world itself from the material

is another and widely different thing. On the basis of materialism no religion, and, indeed, no philosophy can be built, and none know this better than materialists themselves. Manipulate matter as you please, you have only matter at the end. Out of matter you cannot get thought, soul, God. No wonder that the philosophers, so called, who deny the existence of mind, scout mental philosophy as much as religion.

On this subject, as in most others, two extremes are to be avoided. First, there is the danger of under-estimating the amount of truth in heathen systems. And this danger is not a harmless one in the case of Christian missionaries. Anything like contempt or indiscriminate condemnation on their part awakens a spirit of hostility, which is an effectual barrier to all influence for good. Such condemnation is sure to be put down to ignorance. A missionary of all men must show that he knows and can appreciate all that is true in other faiths, and he can do this with perfect loyalty to the truth whose messenger he is. Oppose error and condemn sin he must, and he will find enough to oppose and condemn; but he will do this with greater effect the more he has sought to bring himself into sympathy with those to whom he speaks. A Christian can afford to be charitable and generous in his estimate of other faiths. Those who know the best and worst of heathenism know that rivalry is not to be dreamt of. Moreover, is it not a mark of Christian charity that it "rejoices in the truth"? No one can give larger scope to such charity than a disciple of John Wesley. He believes in universal redemption and goes forth to speak to a redeemed world. He has no doubt that Christ made atonement even for the millions who passed away in "the

times of this ignorance." Can we suppose that even with respect to these the atonement was without result, that it procured for them no grace from "the Father of the spirits of all flesh"? Nay, ought we not to trace whatever gleams of truth and goodness we find in the heathen world of Greece, and Rome, and India, the wisdom and virtue of their greatest lives, not to the unaided resources of human nature—that would surely be the veriest Pelagianism—or to natural evolution, but to "the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world"? The light that pours on us its full noontide splendour shone there only in broken, glimmering rays, but it was the same Light. Just as there was never any light in the physical world that did not come from the Sun, so there was never any light in human mind or conscience that did not come from "the Light of the world," the eternal Word, the Revealer of God to man. Besides, to deny to the heathen all possession of truth would be to destroy their responsibility. Their sin is in proportion to their light. We cannot follow a better example than the great Apostle, who, while taking his stand on what the heathen knew of God and appealing to the remnants of truth in their literature, was none the less a faithful and fearless herald of the Gospel of Christ.

The other extreme, which exaggerates the good in heathenism, is more dangerous, and in certain quarters more popular. Religious evolutionists would make the difference between Christianity and other religions one merely of degree, and explain Christianity itself by natural development. We cannot of course complain of the attempt to prove this by the ascertained facts of history. An evolutionist has just as much right to try to prove his thesis by

accepted facts as we have to try to prove ours. What we complain of is that the theory which should only appear at the end is often assumed at the beginning, and colours the whole course of investigation. The verdict is brought in and sentence passed before the evidence is heard. Indeed the witnesses are only allowed to say what agrees with the verdict. Against this we protest, not in the name of faith, but in the name of science. It may be said that we commit the same fault in coming to the subject with Christian prepossessions. But this is to misstate the case. We simply argue from accepted facts, as we have conceded every one is at liberty to do. The conclusions can always be tested by the facts. The injustice is when professedly scientific inquiry is prosecuted in the interest of theory. A criticism by Professor Müller applies to only too many: "We may accept all the facts of M. Renan, for his facts are almost always to be trusted; but we cannot accept his conclusions, because they would be in contradiction to other facts, which M. Renan places too much in the background or ignores altogether" (*Chips*, i. 349).

If we are asked, What is likely to be the ultimate result of inquiry in this field in relation to Christian faith? we answer, The same as in the field of physical science. Does any Christian doubt that in the end physical science will greatly strengthen the foundations of faith? Its most fruitful discovery is that of the universal reign of law. In ancient times the great physical symbol of order or law was the stately march of the heavenly bodies. The Eastern world is in accord with the Western on this point, for it has been shown that the Sanscrit word *rita*, which is the equivalent of our law or order, is taken from the movements of the heavens.

But the application of the same principle to the internal structure of material bodies, to human society and history, was little suspected in antiquity. It is now shown that the same law extends to the most minute objects, and the structure of the smallest particles which analysis can reach. From the least to the greatest everything is ordered in number, weight and measure. Surely this universal harmony, this Cosmos, as the Greeks with their fine sense for the beautiful called the fair world they looked upon, strengthens to an incalculable degree the necessity for a Supreme Intelligence. A world all caprice and chaos might be explained by the blind working of atoms, but not so a universe pervaded from centre to circumference by order and beauty. To make law itself the explanation is not a very rational proceeding, for it is the very fact of law which requires to be explained by being assigned to a sufficient cause. In some hands law becomes a sort of philosophical fetish. We look upon the present sceptical tendencies of science as a passing aberration. Sceptical theories are no part of science itself, but additions due to unscientific imagination. When a justly distinguished teacher discerns in matter "the promise and potency of all terrestrial life," he candidly tells us that in order to reach this tremendous conclusion he has to "cross the boundary of experimental evidence" in obedience to an "intellectual necessity"—a necessity, by the way, as hypothetical as instinct, or genius, or intuition, or, according to some, revelation,—that is, he is merely expressing a personal opinion. It is often said that works like the *Bridgewater Treatises* and Paley's *Natural Theology* are out of date, and no doubt this is true as to the range of their scientific knowledge. But their principles of argumentation are the old, everlasting

principles of universal reason. We trust that when the new Christian apologies of the same class come to be written, as they will, they may be marked by the same clearness and strength and felicity of argument.

Similar results, we believe, will follow in the religious sphere. The object of science in the religious and historical, as in the physical field, is to discover and exhibit the unity that binds the whole together. From the greater complexity of the phenomena and the nature of the factors which here come into play, this task is far more difficult in the former than in the latter case, but it is being done.

Let us here protest against the notion that, by establishing the presence of law in the world of human action, we exclude the possibility of freedom and bring the moral world under the reign of the same necessity, or, as it is called in these days, determinism, as the physical. It is a mere assumption that all laws in the sense of orderly sequences must perforce be of the same kind. Their nature must vary with the conditions with which they deal. Law cannot mean the same for man that it means for a stone or a planet. It must take into account the whole difference between man and a stone. Moral law must harmonise with the freedom and responsibility to which every one's consciousness bears witness. It is a curious inconsistency of modern scepticism that the very persons who forbid us to argue from mind to matter, as in the design argument, and assert that to do so is illegitimate, themselves argue from matter to mind. They say that, because the physical laws which reign in nature are necessary, the laws which govern human conduct are necessary too; that to prove the existence of law is equivalent to proving necessity. We affirm, on the contrary, that our

argument from mind to matter is legitimate, because we do not assimilate matter to mind, we do not say that the designing intelligence is in the matter but simply the product of designing intelligence; whereas they assimilate mind to matter, asserting that law must mean the same for one which it means for the other. We do not transmute matter into mind, they do transmute mind into matter. On the contrary, law must leave human freedom untouched, and work out its results through or in spite of that very freedom.

Some dim perception of the unity of purpose running through the religious history of mankind is beginning to dawn upon us, and it brightens day by day. We have no reason to think that the unity fails where our knowledge of it fails. We do not suppose that our horizon is the limit of existence, that beyond where our vision ends there is nothing more to be seen. We would rather attribute the defect to the limitation of our faculties. Higher intelligence may read order and harmony where we see confusion. Our knowledge on this subject is only in its infancy. There can be little doubt that one day the evidences of design will be seen to be as plentiful in history as in creation. In other words, it will be seen that one can as little be explained without a Divine Ruler as the other without a Divine Creator; that man has just as little been left to be the sport of chance or accident as inanimate nature. It is a far stronger proof of intelligence, a far higher order of government, to control free agents than to control dead matter and force. It would be poor praise to God to say that He can only carry out His purposes through passive instruments. The very perfection, the very glory of His government consists in the fact that amid the

endless play of powers free as His own, he carries on His purposes to ultimate triumph.

Contemplated under this point of view, the whole religious history of the world may be regarded as a preparation for Christianity. Not that other religions stand on the same level as the Jewish in this respect. There are different kinds of preparations, some designed, others permitted; some positive, others negative. When we see that not one nation, but every nation has put forth its whole strength in the effort to solve the problem of religion, that the question has been approached from every side and every kind of solution has been tried, and with the same result, can we suppose that all this has been permitted without purpose? All these blind gropings and longings of man's spirit after God, these hesitating answers and guesses at truth, have they been mere beatings of the air?

Such a view of the meaning of history is by no means identical with the theory of the divine education of the world, of which we have heard so much. That theory supposes error to be a necessary stage on the way to truth. We might as well say that wrong is a necessary stage to right, and ignorance to knowledge, *i.e.*, that opposites are identical. If there is any meaning in words, error is a departure from truth; and how men can reach truth by departing from it is a mystery. The first step in the return to truth is the abandonment of error. True, the abandonment may be gradual, but in so far as it is abandonment of error it is truth. The theory referred to virtually implicates God in the authorship of error and sin, implying that He uses them of set purpose in the training of mankind. Such a notion is altogether abhorrent to every right-thinking mind, nor is it

necessary on the Christian standpoint. We hold that man was originally in possession of truth as he was morally good, and that he might have advanced to perfection in both respects without error and sin. That he did not do so, is his own fault. It may be said that the law of development, which we admit, in Scripture is practically the same thing, but it is not so. Incomplete truth is not error, just as incipient goodness is not sin. The morning twilight is not darkness. Error and sin are no necessary conditions of development and progress. There may be development in what is good. But while rigidly limiting the authorship of evil to man, we may yet consistently believe that God overrules evil for greater good. Scripture and history are full of examples of this. Otherwise, it would be in the power of man to withdraw himself altogether from the divine control, and to exclude God from wide tracts of His own kingdom, a thought not to be entertained for a moment. The Pharaohs and Nebuchadnezzars and Herods and Pilates of history are only more striking illustrations of a universal law, by which evil is made to contribute to its own defeat. The entrance of sin modifies, but it does not annihilate, the divine purpose in creation. It is impossible for us to trace the working out of this purpose in all cases, or to explain all the difficulties which may be started. It may never be possible for us to do this fully. But we know enough to justify us in believing the fact. Such a divine purpose gives meaning and unity to history, which otherwise is a scene of discord and contradiction. If St. Paul could speak of inanimate nature as longing for the revelation of future glory, may we not regard man's religious strivings as an unconscious prophecy of a preparation for that purer faith which was to be the satisfaction of

all his aspirations? This point of view, which is the one taken in such works as Hardwick's *Christ and Other Masters*, is, we are convinced, the right one, and the only one from which the history of mankind becomes intelligible.

On one point we differ fundamentally from religious evolutionists of all shades. They are looking for some system in the future which will combine the good of all preceding systems. We hold that Christianity does this. Whatever of truth and goodness is found in other religions is found in Christianity in finished form. Is it asked, Which Christianity, of which school, or church, or age? We answer, The common Christianity of all churches and ages. We hear much about "The Church of the Future," "The Gospel for the Nineteenth Century." Christianity *is* the Church of the Future. The Gospel of the first century is the Gospel for the nineteenth. It alone bears the stamp of universal purpose. We need not fear to acknowledge that polytheism, and all the other isms, owe whatever attraction or vitality they possess to certain elements or aspects of truth which they embody; but all these, purged of the enormous errors with which they are connected, are harmonised into a perfect whole in Christianity. Each doctrine in the complete system of Scripture answers to some need of human nature. Christ is "the Truth" absolutely. *Our* hope for the future is not that false systems and true will blend into something higher, but that Hindu, Buddhist, Mohammedan, and Jew will recognise in the Gospel of Christ that which responds to every true instinct of the soul. Here is the centre of unity for mankind. That cannot be found, as some dream, in sentiment alone. Men cannot be one in affection while utterly at variance in intelligence and will. Human nature is itself a unity of powers, not all

intelligence, or feeling, or will, but all these together. That which satisfies human nature must satisfy these. Christianity, that is, Jesus Christ, does this. He reveals God, who is truth and holiness and love—truth for the intellect to apprehend, love for the affections to delight in, holiness for the will to strive after—and it can only be by believing the same truth and holiness and love that man can be brought into harmony with himself and his fellows. "No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him." "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." Thus is Christ the centre of the world. There is not a soul but is connected by invisible lines with Him. To men in their weary search for truth and righteousness and eternal life, He says, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." Thus, our faith stands secure that "in the dispensation of the fulness of times He will gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth."

NOTES.

Note 1.

Buddhism, by Rhys Davids, published by the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, is an excellent popular manual on the subject. The founder of Buddhism is known by different names. Guntama is his family name; Shâkya-muni, Shâkya-sage, his tribal name; and Buddha, the Enlightened One, a title of honour. The history of his renunciation of princely rank for the life of a religious student and teacher, is one of the most romantic on record. In the recoil from the extravagances of Hindu polytheism he ignored, or altogether denied God, the soul, and immortality. In short, he rejected religion, making virtue everything. To speak in modern language, he taught pure materialism or secularism. The distinctions of caste and faith in ceremonialism were utterly repudiated. While the system which bears his name has played as great a part in history as Mohammedanism, his personal character is far purer and nobler than Mohammed's. He relied on teaching alone for the propagation of his views. Buddhism has proved itself a missionary religion. Although it originated, and at one time it is said generally prevailed, in India, to-day there is not a Buddhist to be found there. The history of its expulsion is involved in obscurity. At present China, Burmah and Tibet are its strongholds. Buddhists found themselves unable to live on the abstractions of their founder, and in their hands the system became completely transformed. Of Tibetan Buddhism, Mr. Davids says: "Lâmaism, indeed, with its shaven priests, its bells and rosaries, its images and holy water, and gorgeous dresses; its service with double choirs, and processions, and creeds, and mystic rites, and incense, in which the

laity are spectators only; its abbots and monks, and nuns of many grades; its worship of the double Virgin, and of the saints and angels; its fasts, confessions, and purgatory; its images, its idols, and its pictures; its huge monasteries, and its gorgeous cathedrals; its powerful hierarchy, its cardinals, its Pope, bears outwardly, at least, a strong resemblance to Romanism, in spite of the essential difference of its teaching, and of its mode of thought."

Respecting Nirvâna, the distinctive dogma of Buddhism, there has been much controversy. That the word means *extinction*, is universally admitted. But extinction of *what?* It is generally interpreted as equivalent to the extinction of the soul, or personal existence. Mr. Davids thinks that it means extinction of the evil desire, which is the cause, according to Buddhist notions, of successive births. He would thus make it equivalent to *virtue*, or *holiness*. But it must be remembered that Mr. Davids has already said that for Buddha there is no soul to be extinguished. Thus, in the end, Mr. Davids agrees substantially with the common view, which ascribes to Buddhism in the first instance the common belief in the existence of the individual soul.

Note 2.

The following quotations will be enough to show that we have rightly interpreted his position: "What I hold is that with every finite perception there is a concomitant perception, or, if that word should seem too strong, a concomitant sentiment or presentiment of the infinite; that, from the very first act of touch, or hearing, or sight, we are brought in contact not only with a visible, but also, at the same time, with an invisible universe. Those, therefore, who deny the possibility or the legitimacy of the idea of the infinite in our human consciousness, must meet us here on their own ground. All our knowledge, they say, must begin with the senses. Yes, we say, and it is the senses which give us the first intimation of the infinite. What grows afterwards out of this intimation supplies materials both to the psychologist and to the historian of religion, and to both of them this indisputable sentiment of the infinite is the first pre-historic impulse to all

religion. I do not say that in the first dark pressure of the infinite upon us, we have all at once the full and lucid consciousness of that highest of all concepts—I mean the very opposite. I simply say we have in it a germ, and a living germ; we have in it that without which no religion would have been possible; we have in that perception of the infinite the root of the whole historical development of human faith" (p. 45). Observe how, in the next quotation, our author accepts the premiss that reason must assert nothing which the senses do not give: "In trying to discover the living and natural springs of religion, we must take nothing for granted, except what is granted us by all philosophers, whether positive or negative. I explained in my first lecture how I was quite prepared to accept these terms to the very end of my course. We were told that all knowledge, in order to be knowledge, must pass through two gates, and two gates only—the gate of the senses, and the gate of reason. Religious knowledge also, whether true or false, must have passed through these two gates. At these two gates, therefore, we take our stand. Whatever claims to have entered in by any other gate—whether that gate be called primeval revelation or religious instinct—must be rejected as contraband of thought; and whatever claims to have entered by the gate of reason, without having first passed through the gate of the senses, must equally be rejected, as without sufficient reason, or ordered at least to go back to the first gate, in order to produce there its full credentials. Having accepted these conditions, I endeavoured to show, first of all, that the idea of the infinite, which is at the root of all religious thought, is not simply evolved by reason out of nothing, but supplied to us in its original form by our senses. If the idea of the infinite had no sensuous percept to rely on, we should, according to the terms of our agreement, have to reject it." And so on.

Note 3.

On page 22 of *Hibbert Lectures* Professor Müller says: "In a course of introductory lectures on the 'Science of Religion,' delivered at the Royal Institution in 1873, I tried to define the

subjective side of religion, or what is commonly called faith, in the following words :—'Religion is a mental faculty, which, independent of, nay, in spite of sense and reason, enables man to apprehend the infinite under different names and under varying disguises. Without that faculty, no religion, not even the lowest worship of idols and fetishes, would be possible; and if we will but listen attentively, we can hear in all religions a groaning of the spirit, a struggle to conceive the inconceivable, to utter the unutterable, a longing after the Infinite, a love of God.' I do not quote these words because I altogether approve of them now. I very seldom approve altogether of what I have written myself some years ago. I fully admit the force of many objections that have been raised against that definition of religion, but I still think that the kernel of it is sound. I should not now call it an exhaustive definition of religion, but I believe it supplies such characteristics as to enable us to distinguish between religious consciousness on one side, and sensuous and rational consciousness on the other." On page 26 the lecturer proceeds to speak of the three functions of sense, reason, and faith; but the two latter are made subordinate to, or dependent on, the first. Both are "developments of sensuous perception." How in this case faith acts independently, nay, in spite of sense and reason, it is not easy to see.

Note 4.

So high an authority as Dr. Legge in his recent work, *The Religions of China*, takes the same view of the course of religion in that country that has been taken above in respect to India. The modern Chinese religion, or religions, he regards as a corruption of a primitive monotheism. Owing to the peculiar structure of the Chinese language, he believes that he is able to establish the existence of such monotheism at least 5,000 years ago, long before the date of the earliest literature. "Five thousand years ago," he says, "the Chinese were monotheists—not henotheists but monotheists" (page 16). And again, "A belief in one supreme and only God was coeval with the fathers and founders of the nation, and was testified to by the primitive characters" (page 70), a species

of proof not accessible in India. The corruption of religion in China took a different form from what it did in India, the worship of spirits and ancestors taking the place of nature-worship. Like the writers of the Vêdas, Confucius did not claim to be an original founder, but simply a transmitter of what he received from earlier days (pp. 4, 123).

Note 5.

Another point should be remembered. We must beware of reading modern meanings into old words. The Vêdic Hindu had the word dêvatâ, which answers to our *deity*, and also the word *dêva*, which is the Greek θεός and the Latin *Deus;* but it is more than doubtful whether he had the idea of Deity or God. The words are the same, but the meanings attached to them are widely different. Professor Müller rightly enough thinks that *dêva* in the *Vêdas* would be better rendered "bright one" than "god." He says: "*Dêva*, from the root *div*, to shine, meant originally bright; the dictionaries give its meaning as god or divine. But, if in translating the hymns of the Vêda, we always translate *dêva* by *Deus*, or by god, we should sometimes commit a mental anachronism of a thousand years." And again: "Let us suppose that we could place ourselves face to face with the poets of the Vêda, even with those who called the rivers mothers, and the sky father, and who implored them to listen, and to free them from guilt; what would they say if we asked them whether the rivers and the mountains and the sky were their *gods?* I believe they would not even understand what we meant." This is good doctrine, but, unfortunately, the teacher sometimes forgets his own teaching; else he could not so often picture before us the Indian Aryan with his *Dyaushpitâ*, and the Greek Aryan with his Ζεὺς πατήρ, and the Italian Aryan with his Jupiter, and the Teuton Aryan with his Tiu or Zio, and the English Aryan with his "Our Father, which art in heaven." We confess that the parallel grates sadly on our ears, and the more so as by the writer's own canon it is without reality.

Note 6.

"We also saw how other ideas, which are truly religious, and which seem the most abstract ideas that man can form, were nevertheless—like all abstract ideas—abstracted, deduced, derived from sensuous impressions; even the ideas of law, virtue, infinitude, and immortality."—*Hibbert Lectures*, p. 375.

THE DOGMATIC PRINCIPLE

IN

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THEOLOGICAL SEM

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A Discourse,

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THE DOGMATIC PRINCIPLE IN RELATION TO CHRISTIAN BELIEF.

THE subject assigned to me by the Trustees of the Fernley Lecture is that of Christian Dogma, or, as I have ventured to interpret and define it, the Dogmatic Principle in relation to Christian Belief. I approach my task under limitations too obvious to be more than hinted at. They arise in part from the nature of the subject, and the many outlying but closely related questions to which it leads; and in part they are personal to the lecturer, and, as such, deserve no further mention. In the brotherhood to which he has the honour to belong apologies and excuses are not greatly encouraged; but he who amid the occupations of an active ministry attempts a duty whose first condition of success would seem to be studious leisure, will not reckon in vain upon the sympathy of his brethren.

It would be a difficult, if not a hopeless, undertaking to enumerate and classify the various movements of religious thought in our time. Fortunately it is not necessary to make a complete survey of the courses of contemporary thought, and determine their mutual relation and significance, before discussing a particular characteristic of the present period as to whose existence men of all parties are agreed.

What is the nature, and what are the probable conse-

quences, of the hostility to dogma so widely prevalent around us? That hostility ranges from timid disparagement to open assault. It embraces and combines persons who have little in common with each other beyond a general notion that the interests of truth, of freedom, and religion are imperilled by the principle of dogma. The term itself is loaded with evil associations. It is so used as to suggest harshness and arrogance. It is put in contrast with free inquiry, with the claims of reason, with the spiritual instinct of man, or the clearness and simplicity of Scripture, and under this weight of aspersion is, in many quarters at least, prejudged beyond possibility of appeal. The secondary and inferior meaning of the word "dogmatism"—itself very suggestive—has been made to reflect discredit on the whole family of terms, from which they continue to suffer in popular estimation; for when once a term has become effectually, however unreasonably, depreciated, the chances of restoration to its proper sphere are small and remote. The effort required to discover and maintain its real meaning is what most persons are unwilling, and many unable to make. Hence the opponents of dogma possess a practical advantage of no small value. Let the assumptions contained in popular language be allowed to pass; let the impression be made that dogma means the substitution of authority for truth, and of confident assertion for reasonable proof; that the dogmatic method is under the curse of intellectual and spiritual barrenness; that on the one hand it impedes the free movement of the human mind, and on the other invades the province and prerogative of Scripture,—and who will care to defend it? Grant this, and who will not fall in with the cry of "Religion without dogma; a living faith, but no fixed creeds?"

It follows that in any inquiry into the value of the dogmatic principle it will be necessary to rescue the terms dogma and dogmatic from associations with which they are but accidentally connected, and for which they cannot be held responsible. To this matter we shall refer again in due course.

Amongst the opponents of dogma to whom we must refer, we shall not, on this occasion, include the most unappeasable of all. There is a hostility to dogma which it is useless to discuss as such, since it is not really directed against the dogmatic method, but against the foundations and first principles of all religion. It is not a question with these of excess or defect in the method of defining and formulating doctrine, but of the possibility of a religion in any sense whatever. Where the knowledge of God and the very possibility of that knowledge are denied, or classed among things that cannot be affirmed, there is nothing to be looked for from a vindication of the dogmatic principle, or of any other principle which proceeds on the assumption that God is, and that He may be known. It is not in the more or less of our formal definitions that we offend, nor is it by any revision of our doctrinal methods that we can satisfy opponents of this kind. The issue is altogether deeper and more direct. If there be no God, or if God be unknowable, there can be no theology, and it is worse than waste of time to discuss theological method. For atheist and agnostic, for sceptic and secularist, our inquiry can have no interest or even relevancy.

But amongst the depreciators of dogma with whom we have enough in common to make discussion reasonably hopeful, two classes may be distinguished. The anti-dogmatic spirit, as exhibited by the first of these, is in principle

legitimate, and even necessary, and only becomes hurtful when excessive and disproportionate; with the other, it arises from misapprehension, or, it may be, from pure ignorance. We will consider them in their order.

I. There is an attitude, if not of positive hostility to dogma, at least of watchfulness bordering on suspicion, to which some minds naturally incline. They have a strong sense of the abuses to which the exercise of authority is liable, more especially where religion and morals are concerned. They are keenly alive to the evils arising from a too-confident logic. To establish particular interpretations of truth in creeds and other formularies they reckon a kind of intellectual tyranny, by which the ways of personal freedom are narrowed or foreclosed. They talk much of progress in theology, and expect great things from an understanding and insight yet to be developed in the Church; but toward this, defined and formulated belief will contribute little. They interpret the antagonism between "the letter" and "the spirit" to mean that religion thrives best apart from doctrinal standards. Hence they are found on the anti-dogmatic side, not with the intention of injuring Christianity, but rather of doing it service.

In all this there is, perhaps, not much to complain of. It is the manifestation in theology of an order of mind largely represented in almost every department of human activity, and to which here, as elsewhere, important functions are assigned. The equilibrium of living bodies is the equation and result of various forces, those that restrain and moderate being as necessary to the result as those that originate and impel. Familiar illustrations of this truth present themselves in civil and social life. The principle of authority, essential to

the existence of society, must be co-ordinated with that of personal freedom,—the rights of the State as a whole with those of individuals. These involve opposing, though not contradictory, claims, often very difficult to adjust, and men are attracted to the one side or the other by considerations with which the structure and habit of the mind have much to do. It is not perverseness, nor yet infirmity of judgment, that makes one of two men, or of two parties in a State, the champion of freedom, and the other of authority. To neither of them can it fairly be said, "I have no need of thee." The due combining proportions of great principles can hardly be arrived at save through their mutual pressure and conflict; nor, as it appears to us, is it much otherwise in the development of doctrine. Progress is rarely achieved in the straight line of consecutive and unimpeded reasoning. Its line is determined by those elements of resistance which answer to gravitation, to friction, to atmospheric pressure in the material world. As long as the majority of men are quick at drawing inferences, and confident of their conclusions, it is well that there are minds naturally disposed to urge considerations which should check and qualify our inferences, such as the limits of our knowledge, and the imperfection alike of the powers we possess and the methods we employ. In this way the process of doctrinal definition is kept under wholesome restraint. We can hardly imagine, we can hardly wish it otherwise, while our powers are what they are, and while it is apparently impossible to arrive at the full and fair proportions of truth except through the co-operation of many minds, and those of various orders. What is this but to say that the Church as a whole is always greater than its members? Among the servants of Christ and His

kingdom there is no mind so gifted, no heart so large, no unction so abundant but its labours must be made perfect through the gifts and anointing of others.

There is, then, an opposition to dogma which is not so much hostile to the dogmatic principle as contributory to its proper exercise. It is of the nature of a restraining and moderating influence; its office is to keep close watch over all attempts to increase the number and minuteness of the Church's doctrinal decisions. In the interests alike of theology and of spiritual freedom it is to be desired that the anti-dogmatic spirit, in this its reasonable exercise, should always be found among us. To the lamentable consequences of its suppression within the Roman community all Christendom is witness. There it has been thought right and wise to silence its faintest utterances, and the result is, on the one hand, a monstrous growth of rank, unchastened dogma, and on the other an anti-dogmatic spirit which, cast forth from the Church, repays its expulsion by renouncing the last bond of allegiance to Christianity and to Christ.

II. We have next to consider another and very different class of objections to dogma. It is not uncommon to hear dogmatic theology disparaged among sincere Christians as metaphysical and abstruse. It is put in contrast with the simple Gospel, where all is plain and clear. Dogmas are human inventions, mainly due to pride of intellect and naughtiness of heart. To theology is ascribed a principal share in the corruption of religion; creeds and other doctrinal formularies are at the best man's wisdom; and so high does this spirit rise that it is considered a strong recommendation for a teacher of religion that he knows nothing of theology.

It is with sincere regard for persons who mean well that we have ventured beforehand to ascribe this kind of language to misapprehension, or to plain ignorance. The term "simple Gospel," with its winning and beautiful associations, may be improperly used. That is the case when it is limited to such truths or aspects of truth as immediately and obviously bear on edification, to the exclusion of others equally, though not so obviously, essential. The truths which go to a complete setting forth of the Gospel are neither few nor altogether simple, as some men count simplicity. Paul may surely be taken as having preached the simple Gospel. His words to the Corinthians, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified," are often quoted as the very watchword of a Gospel ministry. Yet it lay within an office thus rigorously limited to set forth the doctrine of Christ's Person—incarnate and pre-incarnate,—of sin in its relation to the race and to the individual, of redemption under many profound aspects, of justification, regeneration, and sanctification, of salvation as administered by God and as appropriated and experienced by man, of Christian ethics, of resurrection, and judgment, and the life to come. Are these truths simple? If they are, let us not omit to include them in our "simple" Gospel. If they are not, what sort of a Gospel would it be that was simplified by their omission?

The fact is, that the very simplest presentation of the Gospel leads by logical and moral necessity to one and all of these great topics, or assumes them as already established. The call to repentance implies a doctrine of sin; the exhortation, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," raises sooner or later every question in the circle

of Christian doctrine. It is not every man's calling to be a theologian, nor is it desirable that the preaching of the Gospel should take the form of lectures in theology; but the Gospel which is not doctrinal in root and branch is "another Gospel, which is not another." In vain will Christ be preached if the questions concerning His Person be left open and unresolved. Who is He? Man—more than man? God—less than God? What is His relation to our race? What consequences follow that relation? To answer these questions single passages of Scripture will not suffice. The comparison and analysis of many Scriptures will be required, and even then it will be found that Scripture furnishes premises which compel us to advance to conclusions, and terms must be devised in which such conclusions can be embodied and expressed. Thus we may be far on the way towards a dogmatic theology before we are well aware. We have defined and formulated in spite of ourselves. And, as a matter of fact, the depreciators of dogma are not able to get away from it or do without it. It underlies their thoughts, it gives coherence and unity to their beliefs, it supplies the foundations and premises of their teaching, and moulds their very phraseology.

The humble village preacher or city missionary, little as he may know of the history of doctrine, little as he may value its terminology, could not do what he does, or be what he is, but for the creeds and formularies by which he sets so little store. For many of the terms he finds it convenient, or even necessary, to use he is indebted to dogmatic theology; while others which he does not employ are held in solution in his mind, and are with him though he knows it not. The range of his obligations to dogma extends from the Nicene

Creed to the Westminster Confession, or the Minutes of the early Methodist Conferences, as the case may be. Literally, it was for him that the Nicene Council discomfited Arianism, and made the word Homoousian the chosen symbol of the Church's faith in the true Godhead of Jesus Christ. For him Anselm asked the question, "Cur Deus Homo," and answered it by bringing out the doctrine of satisfaction for sin by the voluntary death of the God-man. It would be easy to multiply illustrations. The popular sermon, the Sunday-school address, the article in the religious magazine reveal to the student their dogmatic origin and line of descent. They who repudiate dogma do so in word only; in practice they cannot. For the most part they tread the ordinary paths of doctrinal tradition, or if by special effort they succeed in forsaking them, it is but to construct, at the utmost possible disadvantage, a dogmatic theology of their own.

These considerations should be borne in mind when we hear doctrinal teaching disparaged in the supposed interests of spiritual religion. That disparagement, when examined, will be seen to proceed in part from a dogmatic self-sufficiency that defines and formulates with much confidence, but is indifferent to the historic results attained by the labours of others, and in part from non-appreciation of the proportion and harmony of Divine truth. The practical result of such depreciation of dogma is a narrow and one-sided teaching, unduly subjective, overweighted in one direction and lean and scanty in another, here unduly positive and there unreasonably timid, and, for want of broad base and general balance, continually exposed to overthrow. In the depreciation of dogma all heresies find their opportunity. In the disuse of creeds and catechisms the restraints upon vagrant

fancy, upon excessive individualism, upon speculation and scepticism, are diminished. When landmarks, boundaries, and guide posts are removed the chances of safe journeying are not increased.

With regard to the proportions of doctrine, a further word may perhaps be allowed.

There are, doubtless, some truths of the Gospel more immediately bearing upon the conversion of souls than others, and where there is an earnest evangelistic spirit in the Church they will be made specially prominent. We will go further, and say that they ought to be prominent in the preaching of the Gospel everywhere and at all times. But we must not therefore disparage and slight other truths of revelation because their use for edifying is not so readily and so generally perceived. The parts of a building that are under ground are at least as essential to its stability as those which meet the eye. Any indifference to the objective nature and grounds of redemption will soon avenge itself upon the subjective and popular doctrines of salvation. Repentance, faith, conversion cannot long be preached successfully apart from a doctrine of sin, and of the mediatorial ministry of the incarnate Son of God. It is easy to represent the Homoousian controversy as a strife about words. 'What matters the *iota* inserted or omitted—"of one substance with the Father," or "of like substance with the Father"? What learned trifling is this! How much better are we employed who conduct mission services, and preach the Gospel to the masses!' And yet on those fine details of Christology, whose scholastic form is sometimes matter of ill-considered reproach, everything depended. Is He or is He not God—God Incarnate—not something only less than

God, but very God of very God? All depends on this: Gospel for the masses, Gospel for the heathen, simple Gospel and the saving of souls—all preaching, prayer, praise depend on, wait for, this: Is He, or is He not, eternal, only-begotten, uncreated Son of God? May we sing,

> "Jesu, Lover of my soul,
> Let me to Thy bosom fly."

and

> "Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
> Let me hide myself in Thee?"

Brethren, we are safe and strong to-day in the faith confessed by the Church throughout the world, "Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ, Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father." But not without conflict was that faith defined. Other men laboured, and we are entered into their labours. Through great crises of fierce and subtle assault they held fast; they examined and rejected the phrases of honour and laudation that would have betrayed the Godhead of Jesus with a kiss; they drew together the golden threads of revelation and wove them into doctrine that guarded alike the humanity and divinity of our blessed Lord; they felt their way to definitions which the keen acid of criticism could not dissolve, and fixed their doctrinal decisions in dogmatic forms against which the tides and currents of fifteen centuries have chafed in vain.

Devotional theology is the flower of which dogma is the root. For a while religious feeling may appear to be self-sustaining, but its seed is not in itself, and unless it renew itself continually from roots of doctrine it will die. Our methods in religion may become too subjective. We may allow ourselves to say what we like and what we don't like

in doctrine till half the wealth of revealed truth is practically neglected. Consciousness may be consulted too early and too often, in forgetfulness of the fact that the needs of human nature cannot be wholly estimated from that nature itself, even when regenerate. Let us not then be drawn from our allegiance to dogmatic truth by pietistic any more than by sceptical invitations. To build up churches on the basis of a non-dogmatic teaching may seem at first to be the short way to great results, and a non-doctrinal piety may for a while reward and encourage the attempt; but when the rain descends, and the floods come, and the winds blow, and beat upon that house it will fall, for it is founded upon the sand.

The objections to dogma which we have thus briefly discussed do not proceed upon any strict interpretation of the term, but rather upon a general notion of its meaning which hitherto we have accepted without examination. We must now consider it somewhat more closely.

The word δόγμα occurs five times in the New Testament. Twice it is used in a political sense of the decrees of Cæsar; twice it is applied to the decrees or ordinances of the Mosaic law; and once to the decrees of the Apostolic Council at Jerusalem. In the Revised, as in the Authorised Version, the word δόγμα is three times rendered "decree," and twice "ordinance." Its sole meaning, therefore, in New Testament usage is decree, or authoritative injunction. This also is its significance in the Septuagint. As a philosophical term it was frequently employed by Greek and Latin writers to denote theories or principles held in the various schools. The etymology of the word would make its primary meaning "that which seems true to any one," hence an opinion or belief. But by a natural process of frequent occurrence

in the history of words, the objective meaning of the term became more and more prominent, and the subjective retired. As the word doctrine generally means—not teaching, but the thing taught, so the word dogma calls attention not to the act of discerning and accepting, but to that which is discerned and accepted. It is a judgment or perception regarded in itself—in relation, that is, to its subject-matter rather than to the apprehending mind. Hence the word dogma came to be used by way of contrast with mere individual opinion, to denote objective and positive judgments in opposition to what is subjective, or matter of speculation and conjecture. A term so useful soon passed into the service of Christian theology, to which it may be said almost exclusively to belong. By early Christian writers it was employed to denote that which was held as true among Christians, being thus equivalent to the 'Christian faith.'

Amid all variations of usage two conceptions underlie the term, and are found in various proportions—sometimes the one and sometimes the other predominating—and these are *definiteness* and *authority*.

A judgment or principle that is not *defined*, but only hinted at or suggested, is not a dogma. Similarly, the term must be withheld from all reasonings that are incomplete, from speculation in all its stages, and from all conjectures, discussions, and inquiries. Whatever else a dogma is, it is at least something defined or formulated. Alike in classical, Biblical, and ecclesiastical usage, dogma implies definite statement.

Again, a dogma has not only definiteness but *authority*. A definition or formulary which is, so to speak, impersonal, having no assignable relation to any person or persons, can hardly be called a dogma. In its very idea it is the expres-

sion of a consent already arrived at, as well as an instrument for securing and preserving consent. In its scientific aspect it is a judgment or conclusion formally stated; in its ecclesiastical aspect it implies authority in those who propound it, and is meant to command the belief of others.

When, however, we ascribe authority to dogma, we are not committing ourselves to any theory of the Church's authority in relation to doctrine, nor to any particular view of the nature and constitution of the Church itself. These are separate questions. The nature, the limits, the value of authority in reference to belief may well be examined hereafter. All that we now maintain is that the term dogma implies, not only definite statement, but the existence and action of the Church within which it originates, or by which it is set forth. To this extent it has authority. Theological dogmas in themselves may be true or false,—this they have in common with other definitions and formularies; the authority propounding them may be legitimate or illegitimate, trustworthy or untrustworthy, as is the case with other authorities,—inquiry into these matters is not foreclosed; but the term we are discussing, whether used with more or less of accuracy, must be held to connote *definiteness* and *authority* in the statement of essential Christian truth.

In thus inserting the word essential it is not necessary that we should accept the challenge to say what truths are essential to the Christian faith, and what are not. The question of fundamentals is too complicated to be a matter of subordinate inquiry in connection with our present subject. Let it suffice that we assume that the term essential as applied to doctrines is not an unmeaning one, and that the word dogma

is reserved for those statements of Christian truth which are primary and fundamental in their importance.

A final word may be said as to the difference between doctrine and dogma. It is not always easy to observe the distinction, seeing that there is no general agreement among writers on the subject. Some would employ the word doctrine to denote familiar and informal teaching, and dogma that which is more guarded and precise. Others would confine the word doctrine to the authoritative teaching of inspiration, and dogma to that teaching when formulated by the Church. To quote an honoured theologian of our own, "Let the word doctrine be sacred to the Bible, and dogma be handed over to the Church." The distinction thus drawn is clear and valuable, but it seems to require the additional canon just named, that, while Christian truth in its endless details may be grasped and moulded by the dogmatic principle, no statement or definition deserves to be called a dogma which is not of primary importance in the scheme of Christian doctrine. This economy in the use of the term will prevent some misunderstanding and much prejudice.

The dogmatic principle, we are now justified in saying, is that which aims at giving formal and authoritative statement to essential Christian truth. We have next to examine the two important conceptions included in our definition. What is the necessity for defining and formulating, and within what limits may they be carried on? And, second, what is the nature of the authority that may be claimed for doctrinal formularies?

I. The necessity for definitions and formulas of belief arises from—

(1) The character of Revelation;

(2) The vocation of the Church; and

(3) The requirements of the Human Mind.

Let these be considered in their order.

(1) First, then, the *Character of Revelation* itself is responsible, if the word may be allowed, for the existence of a dogmatic theology. Under any conceivable mode of revealing God's will, some responsibility will devolve upon the minds of men and of communities by the mere existence of such revelation. It must be apprehended. The meaning of the terms employed, and the relation of its component parts, must be ascertained and recorded. Nor will it be possible to refrain from inferential reasonings, since we may take it to be equally improbable that a revelation should supply no grounds for further inferences, and that all inferences from revealed truth should be themselves matter of revelation. The importance of revealed truths, their spiritual suggestiveness, and, it may be, the very form in which they are conveyed, will irresistibly impel to processes of comparison and inference. We cannot conceive a Revelation which would not lead to the formation of a theology. What, then, is the character in this respect of the Revelation we possess? God has spoken to us "by divers portions and in divers manners." For 1,500 years His revelation grew to completeness. By lawgivers and leaders of the people, by priests and prophets, by psalmists and chroniclers God spoke to our fathers, till in the last days He spoke to us in His Son, "the effulgence of His glory and the very image of His substance." To this Revelation belongs a twofold perfection. Perfect in respect of the temporary and economic purposes for which its various portions were successively given, it is perfect in its enduring completeness and adequacy as a whole, the one Revelation of

God to man. But its perfection is in itself, and only passes into the sphere of man's apprehension through the exercise of his moral and intellectual faculties, quickened and illuminated by the Spirit of God. Upon us devolves the noble duty of searching the Scriptures, and of drawing together into the unity of an enlightened perception the various elements of the one Revelation. Its "divers portions" and "divers manners" compel us to compare, to analyse, to classify, to draw inferences, to find terms in which to embody conclusions and results. In no other way can we even approach completeness of knowledge and belief. Let a single example suffice. The whole of Scripture is a revelation of God, His nature, attributes, and will. In form it is as unlike as possible to that in which our creeds and doctrinal treatises set forth these great themes. It would indeed be a dull pedantic soul that wished the method of revelation to resemble the methods of theology; but he is almost as unwise who assumes that a perfect revelation leaves no place or function for theology. Concerning the nature of God Scripture records facts whose relation to each other it is absolutely necessary to determine. Always and everywhere it testifies that there is one God; yet in the Old Testament there are intimations of some kind of plurality in the Godhead, and in the New Testament we learn that the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghost is God, and yet they are not three Gods, but one and the same God. Further, though Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one God, they are distinguished one from anothe as personal agents. Each of these statements is the sum and result of many passages of Scripture. Ought we to refrain, can we refrain from thus gathering them into summaries? And what shall we do with our summaries when arrived at?

We can neither keep them apart from one another, nor simply lay them side by side and leave the matter so. A final expression must be sought, an ultimate summary in which, if possible, all previous and lesser ones shall be gathered up, for in this way also it is ours to "seek the Lord if haply we may feel after Him and find Him." If it be said that this is a rash and unwarranted endeavour, we answer that it is sanctioned, nay it is prompted, by the "lively oracles" themselves. The things which are revealed belong unto us, and we have hardly made them our own until we have combined their testimony, and discovered, if it may be, the hidden unity that underlies and holds together the manifold utterances of the Word of God. Thus did the Christian Church in early times, not alone from the exigencies of her calling, but under the attraction of glorious truths newly visible above the horizon, labour to formulate her doctrine of the nature and attributes of God. In the course of this endeavour, when the two paramount languages of earth were waiting upon her need, and yielding their wealth to furnish her vocabulary, the word Trinity rose to her lips, a term henceforth redeemed from all uses but one, and finally, not without perils on the right hand and on the left, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity received dogmatic form to which we may boldly say that fifteen centuries have added nothing, even as they have taken nothing away.

We may linger for a moment over this noblest achievement of the Dogmatic Principle, the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity formulated in the œcumenical creeds, and faithfully reflected in the leading confessions of Christendom. The term itself, excelling in dignity and strength, stands at the head of those in which dogmatic theology interprets Divine

revelation. It is at once scholastic and devotional; it belongs to the schools of learning, and to the congregation where God is worshipped in the assembly of His saints. In creeds and articles it ceases not to testify that "in unity of the Godhead there be three Persons, of one substance, power, and eternity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost;" and in the prayer of humble and penitent souls the separate invocations of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are crowned and perfected by the prayer: "O holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, three Persons, and one God, have mercy upon us miserable sinners."

In the confession of the Holy Trinity we may say with but little reservation that Christendom "is builded as a city that is compact together." The schism between East and West in the matter of the double procession of the Holy Spirit hardly disturbs the unity of their consent in this great dogma. Between Rome and the Churches of the Reformation, here at least is no issue raised, the great convulsion of the sixteenth century having left this foundation of faith unshaken. The Lutheran and Reformed Confessions, the English Articles and the Westminster Confession, are here at one with the Decrees of Trent. The very sharpness of controversy and width of separation in other matters, does but render the agreement of the Churches in this fundamental belief the more impressive. To the fact of this agreement Rome bears witness as well as we. Speaking of the Three Creeds, and of the doctrinal decrees which the first four general councils have laid down respecting the Trinity and the Person of Christ, Moehler, the learned Romish historian of doctrine, is pleased to say: "These formularies constitute the common property of the separate churches—the precious dowry which the over-

wise daughters carried away with them from the maternal house to their new settlements." We will not quarrel with the metaphor, nor argue upon the disparaging epithet applied to the daughters. Enough that they 'hearkened and inclined their ear, and forgot their own people and their father's house, that the King might have pleasure in their beauty, and that they might worship Him.' Happy alike in that which they carried away with them and that which they left behind, they may well bear the reproach of overwisdom, and we, their children, shall not be prevented by a sharp word from acknowledging that beneath the wood, and hay, and stubble of her later dogmas, Rome still preserves the ancient and catholic doctrine of the Trinity and of the Person of Christ. And 'we therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.'

(2) The second of the causes to which we have ascribed the growth of dogma is *The Vocation of the Church*, or the necessities of her office as witness and defender of the truth.

It has been well observed that "the nations which filled the earth before the establishment of Christianity had ceremonies of devotion, sacrifices, libations, and priesthood, but they had no articles of faith, no dogmatic theology. They were never taught whether the objects of their adoration were true personal beings, or merely personifications of the wondrous powers of nature; even their mysteries consisted only in the performance of certain rites and practices, and were not accompanied by the delivery and acceptance of any dogma."* With Christianity it is otherwise. It reveals the

* Leibnitz's *Essais de Théodicée*, quoted in Swainson's *History of the Nicene and Apostles' Creed.*

Person and the redeeming acts of the incarnate Son of God and along with these, responsibilities, duties, consequences which have man's whole being for their domain, and time and eternity for their duration. The Apostles preached Jesus and the resurrection; preached Jesus by setting forth His Divine-human person, His authority and office and mission; preached the resurrection by witnessing to the fact and declaring its meaning and results, and called men to a definite belief and confession—"for with the heart men believe unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." As occasion required, the truths of the Gospel were presented in brief summaries, or expanded into long and detailed statements; but, under all circumstances, to preach the Gospel was to make known the truths concerning Christ, and the commands and promises that centred in His person. These constituted the "faith once delivered to the saints," the "deposit," or "thing committed to him" which Timothy was exhorted to "guard through the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us." Then, as time went on, came short summaries of doctrine for use within the churches, forms of instruction for catechumens, confessions of belief to be made by candidates for baptism, directions as to faith and practice for the preservation and furtherance of believers in the way of holiness. It can hardly be questioned that the earliest formularies of the nature of creeds were expansions of the baptismal formula, and that they were used in connection with the administration of baptism. Thus simply and naturally did the Dogmatic Principle come into operation within the Church. Had there been no other influences working towards the same end, the necessities of the teaching office would have led to the formation of dogma. The dogmatic

method, whatever may be said against it, is the method of the teacher, not only of religion, but of knowledge of every kind, so far at least as its elements are concerned. In every school, in every household, the foundations of knowledge are laid in young minds in the form of dogma. Even where there is the promise of largest intellectual freedom farther on, when the region to be traversed is one where authority cannot accompany the student, and no sound other than that of his own footfall will reach his ear, even then the first steps must be taken under authority, and the first grounds of belief be those which dogmatic teaching supplies. And the dogmatic method of teaching, which experience sustains and justifies, has its analogies in the constitution of the human mind and its relations to knowledge generally. If the teacher is found saying to the scholar, 'You must for the present hypothetically believe, believe upon authority what you may not now adequately understand, and this as a condition for understanding hereafter,' nature uses similar language to us all. In the order of nature belief always precedes knowledge, and is the condition of instruction. And when knowledge is at its completest, it rests upon primary and indemonstrable facts of intelligence, the dogmatic foundations, so to speak, laid by God Himself in the form of natural and necessary beliefs.

But to return to the dogmatic teaching of religion. If it be impossible to dispense with the dogmatic method in the arts and sciences, still less can it be dispensed with here. Nothing but the exigencies of a desperate argument could have given rise to the phrase "the Bible without note or comment." Let such a restriction be suggested in the case of any other book, and who would not perceive its absurdity? Let the leanest and barest of human studies be selected, and

if it be a condition that no questions may be asked or explanations given, that all definitions, formulas, summaries, and expressions of judgment and opinion on the teacher's part are forbidden, who will undertake his office? And yet in these studies none but intellectual qualities may be engaged, and no facts or reasonings be concerned that in any way involve the moral nature; while in religion and morals it is not the understanding merely, but eminently the conscience and the will that are addressed, faculties that make light of all didactic methods that do not use the direct imperative "Thou shalt," and "Thou shalt not." Moreover, the foundations of Christian faith and practice must be laid in childhood, in the period of life, that is to say, which beyond all others claims positive and authoritative teaching. And while all men are children for a time, the majority never emerge from childhood, so far as concerns dependence on moral and intellectual guidance. If, then, Christianity is to be successfully propagated, if its truths are to be widely effective over the lives of men and nations, the common modes of instruction must be, as they have ever been, dogmatic. Now and again we hear protests against the injustice of committing young minds to fixed beliefs, and, along with these, suggestions towards a kind of teaching, free from bias and prepossessions, that shall wholly abstain from influencing its scholars in their conclusions. But the protests are not sincere—the suggestions are not acted on by those who make them. It turns out to be a revolt against particular dogmas, not against the dogmatic method which, contradictory as it may appear, finds some of its chief professors among its opponents.

Along with the office of teaching doctrine, that of defending it pertains to the Christian Church. Having laid down

certain positions concerning God and man, sin and salvation, it cannot be matter of indifference in what sense these statements are received. They may be subjected to serious misapprehension. On some ambiguity of statement conflicting interpretations may arise, and one and another of these, allying itself with existing tendencies of thought, or falling in with some special characteristics of the time or the place, may run on to perilous extremes. An aspect or element of truth may be separated from all that qualifies and maintains its place and proportion in the general scheme, and may actually be developed into a falsehood of vast dimensions. Or a truth hitherto assumed rather than formulated may need to be secured by a definition. These possibilities have, in the course of history, been realised over and over again. The development of doctrine in the Christian Church must be regarded in its actual, not its ideal, progress. It has not advanced by regular stages of logical construction, nor as the accompaniment and expression of an even and measurable growth of spiritual life. The dogmatic faith has been formulated amid conflict, and by reason of conflict. We may go farther, and say that the existing body of dogmatic and confessional theology carries upon it the marks of the doctrinal controversies to which in such great part it owes its existence. This may seem to be a serious admission, involving us in dangerous concessions to the advocates of non-dogmatic religion. Is it not made matter of reproach by them that theology is overweighted by the past, and needs to be disengaged from it if it is to live in the future? But our admissions, properly weighed, will not be found to serve their cause. Although their polemic origin is urged in disparagement of creeds and confessions, it is difficult

to see the justice of the reproach, or indeed to see how it could have been otherwise. There is a development of doctrine within the Scripture which throws some light upon this matter. The teaching both of our Lord and His Apostles to a great extent had its occasion and took its form from existing and definite errors in thought and practice. Not only were these reproved, but truth was exhibited in such aspects and proportions as most effectually to refute them. This is notably the case in the writings of St. Paul. Some among the Corinthians had said there is no resurrection of the dead; this gives rise to the Apostle's great discourse on the resurrection (1 Cor. xv.). The Galatians had gone wrong in bringing in circumcision and other works of the law; the Apostle not only administers reproof, but expounds the relation between the old and the new covenants, and clears the doctrine of justification from the perversions of the legal and ritualistic spirit. The Epistle to the Colossians could not have been what it is but for the Gnostic speculations on the relation of the Infinite and the Finite, and on the nature and origin of evil against which it was directed.

It would be easy to urge beforehand the improbability of this method of inspired teaching. It might be said to be below the dignity of such teaching to start from points presented by human weakness and error; that catholic and permanent doctrine could not afford to entangle itself with local and temporary questions; that in proportion as it reflected the characteristics of any period its fitness to mould and govern following ages was diminished. But objections of this kind, and all others drawn from antecedent probability, disappear before the facts of the case. The Epistles of St. Paul are not prevented by their origin from speaking

with authority to successive generations. It is equally true that they have characteristics determined by the time, the place, the circumstances of their origin; and that in respect of authority and fitness to rule men's faith, they are not "for an age, but for all time." Corinthian schisms and Colossian heresies have passed away, but the Epistles that were written to heal the schism and confute the heresy are with us to this day, "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

In spite, then, of abstract objections, we cannot allow that the development of doctrine through conflict with error is a blemish, or source of weakness, in the New Testament Scriptures. Here, as everywhere, the actual method of the Divine government leaves far below it the narrow wisdom which prescribes beforehand what is likeliest and best.

In applying this consideration to our subject, it is not intended to compare the subsequent development of doctrine with that contained in the New Testament, in respect of authority. The distinction involved in the very term inspiration is not a wayward or artificial one. It lies deep in the history of the kingdom of God, attested and illustrated in a thousand ways, and must be here assumed. But the point of comparison is this—that both within the compass of the New Testament, and in the subsequent course of Christian history, the development of doctrine was largely the result of conflict with error. This in itself forms no presumption against its worth; for in the New Testament we have inspired teaching accepting the conditions, and following the requirements, of controversy, without detriment to its absolute and permanent value; and if in post-Apostolic times the same conditions prevail, no presumption lies against the

development of doctrine in this respect. Truth as truth owes nothing to error, but in our apprehension of truth we may owe much to conflict with error. Few of man's best possessions are arrived at except along this stormy path. The truths in philosophy and science, in political and social life, now most firmly held and highly prized among us, have a record of strife, and suffering, and long endeavour, that will compare with the history of our creeds and formularies. Liberty is the last result of many a struggle with oppression; truth is the treasure that remains after the winnowing and sifting of many errors. There is no science, or art, or sphere of human effort from which the reproach can be levelled at theology that peace is the result and crown of successful war.

Before passing from this branch of the subject, a remark or two may be made upon the expression "development of doctrine," more than once employed. This very useful term lies, not unnaturally, under some suspicion, from its connection on the one hand with rationalistic, and on the other with Romish speculation. There is a modern Romish "Theory of Development," of which Dr. Newman's celebrated essay is the classical exposition, and there is a rationalistic theory which is an application of the hypothesis of evolution to the religious ideas of man. According to the former, the process of development is the expansion, under an infallible directing authority, of doctrinal germs and ideas into a variety of new forms and aspects, "and the existing belief of the Roman communion is its mature result." According to the other theory, all religious conceptions have their origin in the human mind, and Christian doctrine is but one branch of its general progress, the Scriptures themselves, and all beliefs

arising from them, being the natural outgrowth and product of the mind acted upon by surrounding conditions. These opposing theories have much in common, and this among the rest—that truth is not made the test of dogma. In the one case authority is the sole criterion; in the other there is, properly speaking, no criterion at all, seeing that, from the rationalistic point of view, dogma can possess no other kind of truth than a temporary and relative adaptation to the religious consciousness from which it springs. But between these opposing theories there is room for a theory of doctrinal development which is allied neither with the one nor the other. It is distinguished from them by the following "notes." *First.* Development does not consist in additions to the Revelation contained in Holy Scriptures; in other words, it does not call new doctrines into existence. *Second.* It is development, not of doctrine in its subject matter, but in the understanding and apprehension of the Church; and, *Third.* Neither for the process nor for the results of development is infallibility claimed, or anything beyond the general guidance and blessing of Him who is "Head over all things to the Church," a guidance which we have abundant reason to know does not preclude the possibility of error in His people.

Having thus briefly examined two of the causes operating within the Christian Church towards the formation of dogma, viz., the character of Revelation, and the necessities of the Church's vocation, we must now proceed to the third of the causes assigned.

(3) The Dogmatic Principle, as a defining and formulating principle, has its essential and necessary cause in the *Requirements of the Human Mind.* We are not only created with the faculty of knowledge, but with a tendency to classify our

knowledge, to reduce it to system, and, if possible, to carry it up into unity. The mind cannot be content while facts or phenomena within its range are isolated: an intellectual necessity is experienced for connecting causes with effects, and parts with the whole to which they belong. The resemblances and differences which we perceive become grounds of classification, and in no direction does the mind more constantly press than towards a classification that shall be final and exhaustive. The relation of this mental tendency to philosophy and theology is thus characterised by fit representatives of each. In his *Lectures on Metaphysics*, Sir William Hamilton says: "Reason, concatenating thoughts and objects into system, and tending always upwards from particular facts to general laws, from general laws to universal principles, is never satisfied in its ascent till it comprehend (what, however, it can never do) all laws in a single formula, and consummate all conditional knowledge in the unity of unconditional existence." In the Introduction to his *Compendium of Theology*, Dr. Pope writes: "The aim of theology is to exhibit the grounds and principles, the connection and harmonies, the results and applications, of the facts of revelation. In common with every science, it obeys the laws of the human mind, which demands that the materials of its knowledge should be inductively generalised and systematically arranged; and, in common with every science, it arranges its materials for use and practical application."

In its endeavours then to arrive at dogmatic conclusions, theology is well within its rights as a science. All science works towards dogma, and, in every department, 'counts not itself to have apprehended' until hypothesis and experiment

have brought it to the formula of which it was in quest. Science glories in proportion as it becomes dogmatic, as it is able, that is to say, to announce in definite terms some constant ratio, or true cause, or exact measure of a force. Newton's law of gravitation and Dalton's laws of combining proportions are illustrious instances of scientific truth brought to dogmatic form. The formulas in which these laws are expressed are among the best treasures of modern civilisation,—some would even say, the most impressive testimonies we have to the powers of the human mind.

Be that as it may, the growth of dogma marks the progress of science. The transition from mere empirical to theoretical and systematised knowledge has its record and measure in precise definitions and formulated results. These are to the schools of science what dogmatic decisions are to the schools of theology. In the one region as in the other there may be hasty generalisations and erroneous conclusions, but the method, common alike to science and theology, is not thereby discredited.

'But,' it may be said, 'a scientific dogma is an assured conclusion, a statement of truth arrived at by appropriate methods of inquiry; whereas theological dogmas are of the nature of assumptions, and are grounded, not upon proof, but upon authority. The one is a goal or landing-place to which we come, the other a starting-point arbitrarily assumed.' It is to be hoped that the nature of this misapprehension is by this time apparent. In so far as dogmas are confident expressions of *à priori* judgment, whether in science or theology, we abandon them to their critics; but the true dogma is, as we have seen, the result of the inductive method applied to the materials of knowledge. A formulated decision, in

science or in theology, will be at once a goal in relation to the process by which it was reached, and a starting-point in relation to succeeding inquiries. The history of a dogma may be divided into two portions—the one embracing its origin and history up to the point of attaining full expression, and the other exhibiting its subsequent influence on progress or discovery. In this respect no invidious comparisons may be made between religious and scientific dogma. In theology, as in science, formulas are results arrived at; but the converse is equally true, in science as in theology formulas are foundations, and in either domain the caution applies, "Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon."

In thus comparing theology with physical or mental science, we are content with the general analogy of their methods and results. Doubtless, differences as well as resemblances will present themselves to our minds. Scientific method undergoes modification in the different spheres in which it is applied. Its application is simplest in connection with purely material phenomena, and becomes more complicated as we pass into the region of moral and spiritual truth. Here not only is the subject-matter more subtle and refined, but serious disturbing causes come into action within the observer which did not arise before. The infirmities and errors of mind which accompany all man's efforts after knowledge have more than their analogue in the deep defects of his moral and spiritual nature. Hence, as has been well said, "the physical sciences may be properly made the practice-ground of the reasoning powers," and, we would add, theology is the sphere in which those powers find themselves at once summoned to their noblest, most arduous task, and

weighted with their heaviest disadvantage. But not thus, thank God, is the statement of the case complete. Over no other province of inquiry do such Divine promises of help and guidance breathe encouragement. To what other seeker is it said, "the Spirit of truth shall guide you into all the truth. . . . He shall take of Mine and declare it unto you"? The nature of our subject bids us make prominent the method common to theology and to science in general; but theology has a blessing all its own. Immeasurably raised above all other sciences in the greatness of its subject-matter, distinguished from them all in the way it discovers and rebukes the folly and feebleness of man, it is equally distinguished by the provision it discloses for enlightening the eyes and directing the heart of the true inquirer. "The meek will He guide in judgment, and the meek will He teach His way."

But to return :—With the claim of theology to be a science the legitimacy of the Dogmatic Principle is established—established, let it be observed, by the right of every science to classify its facts and formulate its conclusions. The Dogmatic Principle is also justified, as we have seen, by the character of Revelation itself, sanctioning, and indeed demanding, the efforts which an intellectual necessity compels us to make. And in the practical requirements of the Church's vocation, outward and historic causes combine with these inherent characteristics of revealed truth and of the human mind to give rise to the theology of dogma. Other causes might doubtless be named as contributing in their measure to the same end, but the grounds assigned are, we are persuaded, sufficient to vindicate the Dogmatic Principle. Further than this our argument has not, thus far, sought to go. The vindication of the Dogmatic Principle is one thing, the

defence of particular dogmas is another. So far as these are concerned, the proper tests have yet to be supplied. A certain principle, capable of wide and varied application, and fruitful of great results, is accredited, but that is all. It is to the application of the principle that we must now direct our attention.

In our definition of the Dogmatic Principle, it will be remembered that we included the idea of authority. Both in popular acceptation and in its stricter meaning a dogma is an authoritative utterance. It is a decision arrived at, and is put forth as such. This is at once its merit and demerit. The principle of authority which has so much to do with the formation of opinion, and with the general conduct of human life, cannot, as we have seen, be excluded from the teaching of religion. What are the limits to its exercise? If authority in matters of faith be underestimated, we surrender, it may be, a chief evidence and principal support of religion; if it be overestimated, allegiance will be transferred from religion itself to the guarantees by which it is accredited.

What shall we say to those who demand an adequate guaranteeing authority for all belief, and again to those who repudiate all authority in matters of faith? This is no imaginary issue. It presses upon Christendom at this hour with tremendous force. We of the Reformed Evangelical Churches are called upon from the right hand and the left to accept authority, and to repudiate authority. The Romanist and the Rationalist unite (not for the first or only time) in assuring us that the only alternative is authority in religion absolute and infallible, or no authority at all. Both declare our position logically untenable. Rome reproaches us with wilfulness and arrogance in accepting the principle of

authority where it suits our purpose, and breaking away from it when it does not. Her language is 'You accept the Nicene Creed, but exclude that of Pius IV.; you receive the Church's doctrine of Original Sin, and reject that of Purgatory, and the Primacy of Peter.' Rationalist criticism chimes in approvingly. 'Your Protestantism is an illogical compromise. You believe so much on authority that you might as well believe more. You have accepted a principle, and then hesitate and bargain as to the application of it. If authority is good for anything as a ground of belief, it is good for more than you are willing to admit. Either come back or go forward. Choose between reason and authority, but don't try to unite principles that are mutually destructive.' To most of us it may appear the easiest thing in the world to decline the alternatives thus presented. But it would be a mistake to suppose they do not powerfully appeal to very many minds. Perversions to Romanism have been a notable feature in the religious history of this country during the last generation, and there is abundant testimony, much of it of an autobiographical character, as to the motives that have led men to Rome. Beyond and above all other motives, the desire for authority in religion has driven them step by step to the Church that claims to be infallible. Pausing for a moment on her threshold, with one final exercise of private judgment to renounce private judgment for ever, they have passed within her portals, to find such repose as her infallibility may afford. With personal responsibility exhausted in one great act of abnegation, doubtless many have found that Church a place of rest not unlike "the island-valley,"

> "Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
> Nor ever wind blows loudly."

Others, again, having gone part of the way, and come near enough to the would-be sponsor and guide of souls, to see the joints and patches of a human invention instead of the radiant beauty of a Divine creation, have turned back, henceforth declaring truth unknowable, and authority a vain pretence. A main part of the strength of the ultramontane position on the one side, and of the rationalistic on the other, is a kind of logical completeness exceedingly effective with many minds. A principle that is unqualified and consistent throughout, that has at least the merit of distinctness and unity, possesses controversial advantages over another that has limitations, and requires to be qualified in statement, and balanced and compensated in application. The theory of an absolute authority vested in the Church to determine and pronounce upon all matters of faith is at least intelligible; it may be without foundation, but its front is broad, and its attitude imposing. As a theory it is confident, it reveals no misgivings, it has no saving clauses, and shrinks from none of the inferences to which it leads. 'Authority, to be authority at all, must,' it is said, 'be infallible. A guide that can err is no guide.' To what poor advantage, by the side of an infallible Church, must a Church appear that eagerly asserts her liability to error, and anxiously disclaims just that authority which is required of her. A big, bold claim to authority, which may be roughly condensed into "Whatever the Church teaches is to be believed," will make its voice more readily heard than a modest and cautious theory which says, "The Church of Christ has authority in relation to doctrine, but it is not infallible, and as a matter of fact her authority is subject to many limitations."

What shall we say then to the notion of authority

fundamental alike in the scientific and in the popular theology of Rome? The history of its development is far too lengthy and complex for review, nor is this the time to dwell upon the results of which it has been so fruitful. Our one question shall be, "What is the authority for that authority?" We are in the presence of a church and a hierarchy, a theology and an ecclesiastical system. The claim that underlies, upholds, and animates the whole vast structure is the claim of authority,—of authority, that is, infallibly to determine what men are to believe. Whether vested in popes and council, or in popes alone, matters not. It is claimed for the Church, and that not an abstract or ideal Church, but the organised and historic community of which the Bishop of Rome is the acknowledged head, that it possesses infallible authority in matters pertaining to faith and morals; that through it, as through an organ of its own creation, the Divine Mind declares itself as to the meaning of revelation. Surely we may be allowed to ask, "Who gave thee this authority?" With this question we touch the root and heart of the whole Papal system, and the answer we obtain is more amazing than all beside in that great system. Volumes more than can be numbered have been written in defence of its authority. Learning, eloquence, zeal, have asserted, vindicated, and glorified it for centuries past. Within our own time the top-stone has been put upon the structure by the dogma of the personal infallibility of the Pope. On what does this authority, in the last place, rest? Let the answer be noted.

Not on tradition. Tradition, properly speaking, can originate nothing. It is but the handing on of belief, or sentiment, or thought. The etymology of the word should

guard us from ascribing to tradition functions beyond its province.

Not on Scripture. Such arguments from Scripture as are used to sustain this authority are after-thoughts. They did not precede, they do not account for it; they were called in to justify its existence. It is sought to make certain Scripture yield proof after the event; that the claim itself arose from those Scriptures never was, and never can be, shown.

The claim rests upon *the antecedent probability that such an authority must needs exist.* Literally, this is all! First, the assumption, there must be somewhere an infallible authority, and then, Rome says, "Take my word for it, I am that authority." It comes to this:—all matters of belief must be accredited and guaranteed by infallible authority, or else we are in confusion and anarchy, nothing is sure, no one knows what to believe; but the infallible authority itself must be taken on trust. This is not a caricature, but a summary of the literature of the question. I must refer again to the remarkable treatise written by the finest genius that Rome now counts among her scholars and divines. I mean the *Essay on Development*, by Dr. Newman. The ultimate point on which the whole argument turns is the existence of an infallible guide who pronounces with certainty the fact of a development being right or wrong. Here then is the place to prove the existence of such a guide, and if learning, and eloquence, fineness of perception and delicacy of touch, are required for the task, this is not only the hour but the man. Well, what is the nature of the proof given? Let the student unwind the fine-wrought passages, almost irresistible in their dialectic subtlety, their grace of insinuation, and power of hinting and suggesting conclusions

beyond the evidence adduced, and what does he find? Nothing but the argument from antecedent probability, appearing and reappearing in every variety of rhetorical form. "Such an authority must needs exist. The need of it is the strongest of arguments in favour of the fact of its supply." "The common sense of mankind feels that the very idea of revelation implies a present, infallible guide." "If Christianity is both social and dogmatic, and intended for all ages, it must, humanly speaking, have an infallible expounder." This is Dr. Newman's language. Nothing more or better has been said, or can be said, for infallible authority. The whole strength of its case lies in antecedent probability. Eloquence can adorn this argument; it cannot add to its logical value. But, to all representations that there must be visible guarantee and infallible authority, we have only to answer "Why?" An assumption has logical value only until it is challenged. What are these specious anticipations of what God must do or will do worth in presence of the facts of the case? The worlds constructed on *à priori* principles in the minds of philosophers are very different from the actual world that God has made; and we need not be surprised if the revelation we possess does not conform in all respects to notions formed beforehand. The memorable words of Butler will here recur to many: "As we are in no sort judges beforehand, by what laws or rules, in what degree, or by what means, it were to have been expected, that God would *naturally* instruct us; so upon supposition of His affording us light and instruction by revelation . . . we are in no sort judges, by what methods, and in what proportion, it were to be expected that this supernatural light and instruction would be afforded. . . . We know not beforehand

whether the evidence of it would be certain, highly probable, or doubtful. . . . In like manner we are wholly ignorant . . . how far, or in what way, God would interpose miraculously, to qualify them to whom He should originally make the revelation, for communicating the knowledge given by it; and to secure their doing it to the age in which they should live; and to secure its being transmitted to posterity."

Let us then avoid the perils of pronouncing beforehand upon what "*must needs be*" in the way of authority, and of authority, and of endeavouring to torture facts into agreement with our theory. Let us rather, taking hold upon the fact of revelation, and bearing in mind the analogy supplied by the constitution and course of nature, ask, "What ground is there for this hypothesis of an infallible authority to interpret and develop revelation?" There is no reply. The spell is broken. The vast structure, rising to the very heavens, and flinging its shadows over all the earth, trembles to its base, and sinks into the sand on which it rose. "I went by, and lo, it was gone: I sought it, but its place could nowhere be found" (Ps. lxxiii. 37).

We shall perhaps be prepared to listen with equanimity to the evils prophesied as following the rejection of infallible authority. These resolve themselves into utter uncertainty as regards belief, with all its consequent attendant sorrow and loss. The perils of private judgment are made to figure gloomily in the account. The term is loaded with every possible reproach. It is made to imply wilfulness and arrogance, ignorance and presumption, shallowness and conceit. As a mental condition it lacks humility, and reverence, and teachableness. As a mental act it is unreasonable and unlawful. It is always considered as unaided by the Spirit of

God, or its claim to such aid is treated with contempt as the delusion of fanatics. The exercise of the intellectual faculties, which is censured under the name of Private Judgment, is thus satirised by a master of sarcasm: "We exult in what we think our indefeasible right and glorious privilege to choose and settle our religion for ourselves; and we stigmatise it as a bondage to be bid take for granted what the wise, good, and many have gone over and determined long before, or to submit to what God has revealed."

But when this storm has gone over our heads, and we have time to take our breath again, we make reply. Though neither private judgment nor Church authority be infallible, both the one and the other may be good for something. When disparagement is too wide and sweeping we may wait composedly till it has spent its force. What is this miserable creature private judgment, this parent of all heresies and source of all mischief, this rebel against authority and law, this other Satan presenting himself among the sons of God? It proves to be nothing less than the reason and the understanding, the whole sum of the intellectual faculties, all that whereby man *is* man, that is, a moral and responsible being, all that whereby each man is himself and no other. This it is which by a false antithesis is contrasted with authority. It is the conscience and reason of man which, even when seeking Divine guidance, are declared untrustworthy and incapable in relation to spiritual truth. But this is to prove too much. On what is our whole belief in God and Christ founded? If the faculties through which alone Revelation can be apprehended are, we do not say imperfect, but fundamentally incapable, there is an end of the matter. No revelation, and for the matter of that, no infallible Teacher of

doctrine can be of service to those whose faculties are thus disqualified. Private judgment, if it must go by that name, is that which revelation addresses, which it challenges, commands, invites to belief and obedience. It is neither treated as perfect in its intellectual and moral capacity, nor yet as wholly incapable. The economy of redemption recognises in man a capacity along with incapacity which is one of the deepest paradoxes of our nature, and yet a commonplace of experience. The proposal that an infallible interpreter shall mediate between God's revelation and the mind of man is a double error. It impeaches the Divine method of revelation, and misapprehends alike the office and mission of the Holy Spirit, and the nature of moral responsibility in man.

Must we then accept the alternative pressed on us by Romanist and Rationalist—'if not infallible authority then no authority at all'? Some persons, strong in a personal grasp of Divine truth, have not hesitated to accept the alternative. They recoil from exaggerated claims, they see no way of admitting authority in connection with Christian doctrine, and at the same time excluding its abuses. They therefore surrender the notion, and rest everything upon individual discernment and conviction of truth. But this we cannot do. We have now to protest from another point of view against the headstrong logic whose motto is all or none.

It will be admitted that authority plays a great part in the structure and organisation of human life. In the acquisition of knowledge, in the formation of opinions, in our practical decisions, we go largely upon authority, some of us knowing that we do so, others unconscious of the fact, but none the less conforming to the practice. It cannot be said that authority

is in all cases trustworthy; numerous instances to the contrary have come home to us. Sometimes we have been wilfully, sometimes unwittingly, deceived. The person from whom we inquire the nearest way to town may misdirect us; the man called in to give legal or medical advice may make a mistake; but no one suggests that human testimony is worthless, or that the notion of authority, based on special studies and experience, is a delusion. None of our informants, from our own senses to the wisest of our fellow-men, is infallible; but we do not therefore cease to use their aid. No one demands infallibility in his informants, or refuses their testimony because it has no infallible guarantees. Students of Butler know that "probability is the very guide of life;" but a whole world, ignorant of philosophy, acts upon this understanding. We receive testimony, as we take all else in our life, according to the conditions under which it presents itself. It may range through every degree of probability, from faintest presumption to practical certainty. But theoretical or demonstrated infallibility is, as all men know, out of the question. It cannot be met with in any one province of our life. Are we, therefore, involved in hopeless confusion and uncertainty? Is there nothing for us, in the absence of infallible directors, but a miserable individualism, in which no man can have good grounds of belief which he has not personally constructed or evolved? Is testimony good for nothing because there are limits to its value? Is there no such thing as authority because no authority is infallible? The common sense of mankind may be trusted for the answer. All the business of men and nations proceeds on the assumption that authority is, within reasonable limits and under fair conditions, a trustworthy guide; and it is part of the practical conduct of

life to judge of the particular conditions under which authority may be accepted and acted upon.

Seldom is the analogy of religion to the constitution and course of nature more manifest than it is here. We ask for authority in connection with doctrine; it comes to us under conditions with which we have been made familiar elsewhere, not demonstrably infallible, but practically sufficient. It does not relieve us of the responsibility of using our judgment, and applying the tests which reason and experience provide. But we are not left the chartless, rudderless mariners which it is some men's pleasure to suggest.

The testimony of the Christian Church as a whole, and of its separate portions in particular, has all the authority which the nature of the case allows. The famous rule of Vincentius, "*Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*"—"That is to be believed which has been held true always, everywhere, and by all"—is obviously rhetorical in form, and incapable of literal application. There is absolutely no one belief that complies with the demands of this canon. But the truth that underlies it is more weighty and impressive to-day than when it was written 1,500 years ago. None but a trifler can lightly dismiss the testimony of the Christian Church to the great primary truths of the Christian religion. Let that testimony be viewed in its most general aspect. It is a testimony contained in her continuous existence, in ordinances and institutions, in express and solemn utterances, and in implied and incidental references innumerable. It is a testimony accompanied and accredited by character and actions new and original in human history, but exquisitely accordant with the truths and principles to which she bears witness.

The unity of this testimony to the incarnation of the Son

of God, His death and resurrection, the forgiveness of sins, the sanctification of man by the Holy Ghost, and eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ,—the unity of the Church's testimony to these great truths, is not broken by all its strifes and schisms, survives all the faults and failures which her history reveals, and at the present time is the more impressive from the number and variety of outward forms in which the Church's life is cast. If we give the name of authority to the consent or testimony by which, in other provinces, matters are commended to our belief and acceptance, we may well call that ample, varied, accumulated consent of many races and many centuries by which Christianity is accredited to us, authority also,—authority commensurate in weight and impressiveness with its subject. Such authority is not, cannot be the final and sufficient ground of faith in Christ; "Not that we have dominion over your faith," is the language of an Apostle and of all Apostolic Churches. But it is a call to faith, it is a proper conducing cause, it is a reasonable, preliminary ground. With Hooker we may say, "By experience we all know that the first outward motive leading men so to esteem of the Scripture is the authority of the Church" (*Ecc. Pol.* I. 310), or with Field: "The authority of God's Church prepareth us unto the faith, and serveth as an introduction to bring us to the discerning and perfect apprehension of Divine things, but is not the ground of our faith, and reason of believing" (*On the Church*, IV. 8).

But there is other authority for doctrine beyond that supplied by the testimony of the Church. We receive the witness of men—we cannot but do so—but the witness of God is greater. All creeds, confessions, and formularies in which

the Church embodies her testimony and interpretation are open to appeal. From the most venerable to the last-born of them all, appeal lies to the Scripture. Theoretically and practically considered, Scripture supplies the tests of dogma and the safeguards of dogmatic theology. Nowhere is this more clearly laid down than in the Articles of the Church of England, a document of dogmatic theology rich in theological and historic interest. *Art. VI.* runs thus: "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not required of any man that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." *Art. VIII.* declares "the three Creeds, Nicene Creed, Athanasius's Creed, and that which is commonly called the Apostles' Creed, ought thoroughly to be received and believed: for they may be proved by most certain warrant of Holy Scripture;" and, finally, *Art. XX.* says, "Although the Church be a witness and a keeper of holy writ, yet as it ought not to decree anything against the same, so besides the same, ought it not to enforce anything to be believed for necessity of salvation." Here we have, thrice repeated, the keynote of Reformation theology so far as the authority of dogma is concerned. To the mocking scepticism and to the arrogant infallibility that unite in asking 'Who is to judge of the truth of creeds and formularies,' we reply '*The Truth itself*,'—and calmly await the issue.

We say "the Truth," for here we reach at last the end of argument. Let the credentials of messengers or witnesses be what they may, the final test of truth is in itself. All questions concerning authority in relation to truth are subordinate and preparatory to this. Sooner or later we are in the

presence of that which claims our belief, not on the ground of any concurring and sustaining human testimony, but for its own sake, on grounds within itself, and an accompanying Divine testimony. Hence the paradox by which many are offended. ". . . The witness which he witnesseth of Me is true. . . . But the witness which I receive is not from man. . . . The very works that I do bear witness of Me . . . and the Father which sent Me, He hath borne witness of Me" (John v. 32, 34, 36, 37). The truth itself, its character and potency, or the witness of the Spirit in, and through, and with the truth, is the last, best, highest authority. "It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth" (1 John v. 7). "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself" (1 John v. 10). "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee" (Job xlii. 5). "Now we believe, not because of thy saying, but we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this indeed is the Christ, the Saviour of the world" (John iv. 42).

The nature and value of authority in relation to Christian belief has now, we trust, been indicated with sufficient accuracy, so far as its principle is concerned. The examination of this principle in its historic manifestations cannot be attempted within the limits of this discourse. The authority of the Christian Church as a whole in its testimony to the main articles of Christian belief is, as we have said, overwhelmingly powerful. For these truths she answers, literally, with her life, for the sum of her testimony is her whole existence. But authority in this widest sense has no local seat or official organ. It is an utterance from all the ages and from many lands. It is at the service of every inquirer,

but cannot be officered or directed by any person or persons, however august and venerable. The authority of particular churches is variable, and cannot be expressed by an invariable formula. But in its least or greatest exercise, like that of the Church as a whole, it cannot constitute an ultimate and adequate ground of belief for any man. Let the analogy of scientific dogma be for a moment recalled. Laws of motion and gravitation, of solid bodies and of fluids, have been discovered, and are now set forth in well-known formulas. By these the young student is instructed. They are set before him in their dogmatic form. He is as yet unable to prove or disprove them. Considerable time must elapse before he is able to comprehend the steps by which these conclusions have been reached, or test for himself the definitions and formulas in which they are expressed. But they come to him with authority. It is not unscientific, or in any way unworthy, that the names of Kepler and Newton, of Dalton and Faraday, should commend to him the formulas with which they are associated. Suppose him to be critical, to be sceptical at this early period of his studies, it will not be unbecoming to remind him that these laws come to him not only recommended by the authority of great names, but by the consent of the scientific schools of this and other countries, and of the century or more, as the case may be, during which they have been successfully employed in experiment and practical research. In a word, the principle of authority would be invoked, not as the ultimate and sufficient ground for scientific belief, but as a strong commendatory reason at least why some persons, in certain stages of their knowledge, should accept conclusions of which they are credibly assured. It is an aim of true scientific education to put every man in the

way of understanding the proofs of things, and if it be said that this is the only kind of knowledge worth calling knowledge, it may be admitted. At the same time, it might be interesting to learn how many persons in an ordinary assembly of educated people are acquainted with the proofs of some of the most familiar scientific truths, or, in other words, have passed out of the state of dependence on scientific dogma, into a well-grounded knowledge of the reason or proof of things. Similarly, it is the aim of all rightly directed religious teaching to lead persons to a knowledge of Divine truth of which they shall ultimately have the proof or witness in themselves; but on the way to that true end of teaching, it is authority, speaking through parents, teachers, catechisms and creeds, that, like the law, "is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ." It best fulfils its office in preparing us to dispense with its service. From the first its note is, "He must increase, but I must decrease;" and when they that were under authority have made their own the living Truth to which it bore testimony, the cry of the forerunner is heard again, "Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before Him . . . this my joy therefore is fulfilled."

We may, in closing, recur to an objection lightly touched upon at an earlier part of this discourse. Dogma in theology is conceived to be opposed to freedom of thought, and this is, perhaps, the most widespread of the misconceptions that surround our subject. This charge, when examined, will, in many instances, prove to be a true indictment laid in the wrong court. Theology is not responsible for theologians, nor dogma for the ecclesiastics and statesmen who have oppressed the consciences of men. The dogmatic principle

has been abundantly abused. As a *defining* principle it has been pressed beyond bounds and out of proportion; and as a principle of *authority* it has been employed in forgetfulness alike of its true sphere, and of its limits within that sphere. Burdens have been placed upon it which it was wholly incompetent to sustain, and in its name burdens have been laid on the spiritual life of men which it was not lawful to impose. The history of Christianity, like the history of men and nations generally, is, to a humiliating extent, a record of sins, infirmities, and follies. Who has the heart to deny it? Who will labour to prove it? What deeds have been done in the name of liberty, and of truth, and of our blessed Lord Himself! The sad prediction, sadder for the oppressors than the oppressed, "They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God's service," has had its too abundant fulfilment. Kings and bishops, councils and synods, have oppressed the souls and bodies of men, slowly and reluctantly giving heed to the command, "Put up thy sword into the sheath."

But what of all this can be laid to the charge of dogma? Is it inherent in the dogmatic principle that its conclusions should be enforced by penalties? Does the logic of doctrine involve the *ultima ratio* of the sword? Let us distinguish between things that differ; between conclusions in science, philosophy, or theology, and the means employed to give them currency, or silence their opponents.

If, however, it be asked whether, apart from the ecclesiastical and political uses to which creeds and confessions may be put, dogma itself is a restraint upon thought, the answer must be "Yes" or "No," according to the notion that is entertained of mental freedom. Human thought is as free in religion as

in science, but let us see what that freedom amounts to. It certainly does not sanction the claim to think as I please and believe what I like, which is sometimes put forward as amongst the rights of man. The laws and forces of nature make light work of any such claim. They exist outside and apart from the minds of men. They do not yield, and shift, and vary with our thoughts, but hold on their way. It is for man to put himself right with them. If he believe things to be other than they are, if he takes them to be that which they are not, he will suffer. He is at liberty to believe that which is true, and this is the only liberty that nature allows. If we deny her she also will deny us. Suppose the permission given, 'Believe what you please concerning nature and her ways, the properties of bodies and the relations of forces,' will the permission convey any real right or privilege, or be anything more than a form of unsound words? If it could mean anything at all, it would be a sentence of deprivation, under which all knowledge acquired and recorded by others would be forfeited, and man sent out to learn through direct and solitary conflict with nature that things are what they are, and that freedom lies, not in denying or ignoring the fact, but in apprehending it. If it be freedom of thought to think as I please, there is least room for it where knowledge is most fixed and certain. Intellectual independence diminishes with each discovery, and the area of free thought shrinks as the bounds of knowledge are enlarged. Alike in science and in religion, the mind's freedom lies, not in arbitrary or wayward self-determination, but in joyful obedience to the truth, for "the truth maketh free." Man going forth unto his work and unto his labour till the evening finds everywhere, in the order of light and darkness, of seed time and harvest, of heat

and cold, of moist and dry, the commands and prohibitions of law, the Divine "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not" written in the frame and constitution of the world. Nature, which exacts a right belief and a true obedience from man as the condition of her bounty, is herself a witness and embodiment of obedience to law. If we may enrich a modern page with the noble thoughts and stately language of Hooker, we may ask, "Now if nature should intermit her course, and leave altogether, though it were but for a while, the observation of her own laws; if those principal and mother elements of the world, whereof all things in this lower world are made, should lose the qualities which now they have; if the frame of that heavenly arch erected over our heads should loosen and dissolve itself; if celestial spheres should forget their wonted motions, and, by irregular volubility, turn themselves any way as it might happen; if the prince of the lights of heaven, which now as a giant doth run his unwearied course, should, as it were, through a languishing faintness, begin to stand and to rest himself; if the moon should wander from her beaten way, the times and seasons of the year blend themselves by disordered and confused mixture, the winds breathe out their last gasp, the clouds yield no rain, the earth be defeated of heavenly influence, the fruits of the earth pine away as children at the withered breasts of their mother, no longer able to yield them relief: what would become of man himself, whom these things now do all serve? See we not plainly that obedience of creatures unto the law of nature is the stay of the whole world?" (*Ecc. Pol.* I. iii. 2.)

And if from the ordered and harmonious world around him man will look within, the structure of his mind bears witness against his claim to independence. The axioms that

underlie his knowledge, that are assumed in every exercise of his understanding, are there he knows not how. He has not devised nor adopted them; they precede every act of mind; they are alike indemonstrable and indispensable. It is a poor preparation for exercising his right to think as he pleases that he proceeds continually upon beliefs which he cannot analyse, of which he can give no account though they cleave more closely to him than his shadow. He cannot believe contraries, he cannot but believe in causes. Whether these are Laws of thought or Laws of things, whether they inhere in the mind, or are the reflection of truths exterior to itself, they are conditions which cannot be escaped, and as such are incompatible with absolute and unconditional freedom.

But when we ascend to the highest sphere of thought and action, that which concerns God and his relations to us, the claim to freedom of thought is most of all out of place. If in respect of other knowledge every fact ascertained is a restraint upon thought, and every fixed truth lessens the range over which we are free to speculate, this is emphatically the case with regard to God's revelation of Himself and His will. That which we believe to be true of Him we are not at liberty to deny. The liberty to wander to and fro in uncertainty, to call God unknown or unknowable, to treat all things as open questions, to disclaim obligation and responsibility,—this liberty he surely loses who has found the Father of his Spirit, and the Redeemer and Lord of his being. Happy loss of liberty! Liberty to wander, exchanged for freedom to abide in the truth!

Let it not then be thought that the dogmatic principle is unfriendly to freedom. If that which we call revealed truth

be neither true nor revealed, if we have followed cunningly-devised fables, let us renounce and withstand it to the last; but if the Scripture doctrines of God and Christ, of sin and salvation be true, our intellectual liberty is not curtailed, but rather established and preserved by the creeds in which they are defined.

These products of the dogmatic principle enshrine and guard the truths by which we live; they protect them from changing fashions, and wayward fancies, and passing influences. They are landmarks when the floods are out, breakwaters to stem the tides of restlessness and love of change. They are standards by which to correct the reckonings and measurements of various minds; they are the voice of the centuries as against the cry of the day; they symbolise at least the calm of eternity amid the hurry and heats of time. Nevertheless, they are among the "tongues that shall cease, and the knowledge that shall vanish away."

"When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

"For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now we know in part, but then shall we know even as also we are known."

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THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THE

WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.

A Discourse,

DELIVERED IN ST. PETER'S CHAPEL, LEEDS,

July 31*st*, 1882,

IN CONNECTION WITH THE ASSEMBLING OF THE
WESLEYAN-METHODIST CONFERENCE
AND AS
THE TWELFTH LECTURE ON THE FOUNDATION OF THE
LATE JOHN FERNLEY, ESQ.

BY THE REV. ROBERT NEWTON YOUNG.

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THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.

It is provided by the terms of the Fernley Foundation that a Sermon or Lecture shall be delivered annually in connection with the meeting of the Wesleyan-Methodist Conference, for the purpose of explaining and defending the Theological Doctrines, or the Ecclesiastical Polity of Methodism, with special reference and adaptation to the necessities of the times.

These terms are sufficiently elastic to admit of a broad interpretation; for the Theological Doctrines of Wesleyan Methodism are the doctrines of the Universal Church; and every feature of her Ecclesiastical Polity is reflected in the spirit and principles of Apostolic Christianity. Any subject, therefore, of general religious interest, might be fairly regarded as falling within the range of the Founder's intentions.

In choosing from an almost unlimited field of topics a doctrine so special and distinctive as that of the "Witness of the Spirit," as the subject of this year's Lecture, I have been influenced mainly by two considerations. The first of these is, that the public preaching and profession of this doctrine is an essential element of the mission of Methodism. It was so regarded by Mr. Wesley himself; for in his second sermon on the "Witness of the Spirit" he says: "It more nearly

concerns the Methodists, so called, clearly to understand, explain, and defend this doctrine, because it is one grand part of the testimony which God has given them to bear to all mankind. It is by His peculiar blessing upon them, in searching the Scriptures, confirmed by the experience of His children, that this great evangelical truth has been recovered, which had been for many years well-nigh lost and forgotten." *

This extract disposes of the allegation that the doctrine of the "Witness of the Spirit" is peculiar to Methodism. It is to be found, as every student of Church history knows, not only in the Holy Scriptures, but in the Creeds and Confessions of Christendom from the earliest times. It was no part of Mr. Wesley's mission—as it has been of the mission of many Reformers—to found a School of Thought: nor, if it had been—if under the mighty impulses which stirred within him he had found time or heart to elaborate new schemes of belief—would even *his* name have proved weighty enough to authenticate a doctrine which was not Divinely and distinctly revealed. It was his work, rather, to give an impulse to the slumbering life of the Churches; and it was the necessity of such a mission, that he should bring to the front all teachings of Holy Scripture which bore upon experimental religion. The great movement of the eighteenth century involved no new doctrinal departure. It was a recovery and reassertion of forgotten truths—it was a revival of expiring life.

The principle of this revival was the presentation of a sound and conscious religious life, as against a cold and formal orthodoxy on the one side, and the phantasies of a mystical empiricism on the other. This, under God, was

* Wesley's Works: v. 124.

the secret of its power. The organisation of Methodism, however masterly in its conception and felicitous in its adaptation, cannot justly be credited with its persistent vitality and its unparalleled success. That which appealed to the eager thousands who gathered round Mr. Wesley and his preachers was the exhibition of a religious life which rested, not on undefined anticipations, or fallible and uncertain inferences, but on a present and conscious sense of the forgiving grace of the Father. The doctrine of the "Witness of the Spirit" opened out to them a heaven, not in the distant future only, but in the very heart of their daily life. Care and poverty and pain were as nothing in presence of a Divine and infallible assurance of the pardon of their sins, and their acceptance in the Beloved. And thus "the Lord added daily to the Church."

This is the testimony which the Methodism of to-day is commissioned to bear. It is a trust, the faithful discharge of which cannot but issue, sooner or later, in the fulfilment of the grand ideal of her Founder—an ideal which he formed at the feet of his Master and ours—the spreading of Scriptural holiness throughout the land. Just in proportion as this doctrine is attenuated and shaded off in her teachings, will the strength of Methodism be impaired, and her very existence imperilled. Methodism is nothing if not a Life. It is hers, by the grace of God, "to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" [Isaiah lvii. 15]. Her mission is manifold; but no function of it is of graver significance than this. If on this doctrine "the trumpet give an uncertain sound;" if, in deference to the rationalising prejudices of the times, the clear teachings of Scripture on this question be compromised, then indeed is the glory departed.

The second consideration which has led me to make choice of this subject, rather than of some other which might seem to have greater claims, arises out of the tendency of the religious thought of the day. Reflecting the spirit of the current philosophy, the drift even of Christian thought is towards the elimination of the supernatural from religion, and the depreciation, if not the denial, of the doctrine of the direct interposition of God in the affairs of human life. As, in the domain of the physical world, it is asserted that the true interpretation of the phenomena of life and form is not creation but evolution: so in the moral and spiritual world it is maintained that the countless problems of our relation to God are to be resolved, not by revelation, but by intuition or induction.

In view of this almost characteristic tendency of religious thought, no subject seems to me of graver moment than that which I have chosen;—nor could an occasion like the present be devoted to a question of more practical and vital utility. For this is the dispensation of the Spirit—a profound fact, too often treated as though it were but a phrase. The Church—that holy temple of the Lord, whose chief corner stone is Christ Jesus, in Whom we also are builded together—"is for an habitation of God through (or in) the Spirit" [Eph. ii. 22]. To every revelation of God among men, to every gracious exhibition of Divine mercy, to every fruitful presentation of the Sacrifice offered once for all, to every pulse of holy life and devotion, the Spirit is essential. Not a prayer reaches the Holiest Place, not a song ascends to Heaven, not an act of Christian grace and charity sheds its fragrance upon earth, but in answer to the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Everything therefore which touches the honour, the sym-

metry, the completeness of His operations and ministrations is of profoundest moment. And if this subject did not bear so close a relation to the personal experience of the Christian —and religion is nothing if it be not experimental—the choice of it would have been constrained by loyalty to the Spirit of God, loyalty indeed to the "Holy, Blessed, and Glorious Trinity;" to the Father, Whose forgiving love is the matter of attestation; to the Son, Whose promised Representative the Spirit is; to the Spirit Himself, Whose supreme function is to bear witness unto the truth.

There is no such counteractant to loose and mischievous speculation as a sound religious life springing from direct and conscious communion with God. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself" [1 John v. 10], fortifying him against all misgivings, and filling him with a satisfaction as to the revelation of God, which no sceptical cavillings or suggestions can sneer away. In proportion to the simplicity of a man's faith will be the soundness of his convictions. Just as he is filled with the Spirit will he be "filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" [Col. i. 9]. And it seems fitting, at the annual gathering of the representatives of a Church which is pre-eminently a Church of experience, which owes her best—her all, indeed—to the Holy Ghost, that some lowly and loving tribute should be offered to Him Who is "The Lord and Giver of Life, Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified."

The doctrine of the "Witness of the Spirit" is one which scarcely admits of novelty of treatment, while it offers little encouragement to the indulgence of speculation. The lite-

rature of the subject is scanty; nor has its historical development been as striking and divergent as that of other doctrines of inferior importance. No councils have been summoned for its special discussion; no schisms have arisen out of its perversion; no such controversies have gathered around it as those which have encircled the doctrine of the Person of Christ, or the Personality and Procession of the Holy Ghost. It has been variously interpreted and misjudged. It has been dissipated as into thin air by the dreamings of the Mystic, overshadowed by the assumptions of the Sacramentarian, depreciated by Predestinarian prejudices, and not unfrequently, at certain periods of Church history, almost ignored and abandoned. But there has been no age of theological activity and reality in which this doctrine has not been held with more or less vigour, and its Scriptural basis maintained.

The argument, touching as it does the very core of religious life and experience, and resting rather upon the testimony of Scripture than upon any other data, lies within the circle of Christian belief. It can have no relevancy whatever for those who decline to accept the Scheme of Redemption, or any of its essentials. To such minds, any evidence as to one of the methods of applying a scheme which, as a whole, they suspect or repudiate, would be altogether superfluous. In this study we are called to hear "what the Spirit saith unto *the Churches*."

The teaching of Scripture as to the "Witness of the Spirit" is not merely casual and inferential. Many doctrines of much importance have to be reached by deduction, gathered rather from the general tenour of inspired teaching, than from direct and special testimony. For it was no purpose of Inspiration to formulate a system of theology. The atoning

work of Christ impresses every page of the Sacred Record; but it took centuries to adjust and harmonise the teachings of Scripture as to His Person, and the mystic relations of the Triune God. Hence the crudeness—I might almost say the puerility—of much of the Patristic literature. In all that directly affects Christian life and experience it is inexpressibly rich; from its wonderful stores of spiritual thought and suggestion we form our noblest manuals of devotion; its sentiments are the proverbs of saintly lore; yet its doctrinal conceptions are often illogical and false. But the teaching of Holy Scripture on this doctrine is singularly simple and direct. It needs no subtle analysis for its discovery; it lies on the surface; and, far from being limited to one or two cardinal texts, its illustration is most ample and various. This important truth, says Mr. Wesley, is revealed "not once only, not obscurely, not incidentally, but frequently, and that in express terms; but solemnly and of set purpose, as denoting one of the peculiar privileges of the children of God."*

This should be sufficient. The Church of Christ has a right to postulate, in the face of unbelief, whether from within or from without, what God has said. This was the method of the ancient Prophets. It was the method of the Master. It was the method of His Apostles. It has been too seldom the method of the Church. She has busied herself rather in the tracing of subtle analogies, in the construction of outworks of evidence, which in their very complexity and vastness have seemed to discredit her faith in the Divine inviolability of that citadel against which "the gates of hell shall not prevail." The weapons of her warfare have too often been carnal, borrowed from the appliances of the foe, rather than

* Wesley's Works: v. 123.

from the armoury of heaven. But an age of Apologetics has seldom been an age of spiritual power. The defence of truth is less effective than its simple and earnest proclamation. The Church is never so mighty as when she bears upon her banners that legend which is at once the warrant of her mission and the watchword of her strength: "THUS SAITH THE LORD."

I shall therefore endeavour to treat this subject from the standpoint of the Christian believer; and while not declining the help of such side lights as inference and analogy may offer, I shall found my argument mainly on the direct testimony of the inspired Word of God: praying that "He Who did teach the hearts of His faithful people, by sending to them the light of the Holy Spirit, may grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in His holy comfort, through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, Who liveth and reigneth with the Father in the unity of the same Spirit, world without end. Amen."

I. *Provision is made in the Scheme of Redemption for certifying to the believer in Christ the fact of his adoption into the Family of God.*

"My belief in general is this," says Mr. Wesley, "that every Christian believer has a Divine conviction of his reconciliation with God." *

Even if there had been no distinct Scriptural testimony on this point, it might have been assumed that some such intimation of the relation of the believer to God would have been afforded to him.

1. The character of God, and the perfection of His works would certainly encourage this assumption. The study of

* Wesley's Works: xii. 473.

Nature, whether scientific or superficial, discovers everywhere not only the evidence of a wise and beneficent purpose, but an infinitude of resources for its fulfilment; a matchless symmetry, and an adaptation of means which is competent and complete. Even if we accept a theory of development which, through an ascending series of processes, secures an ultimate perfection of form and fitness, the argument is in no wise invalidated. Each stage in the series may be for its purposes as perfect as the final result. The closer our investigation of physical phenomena, the more thorough will be our endorsement of the legend which appears on the very first page of the inspired Word: "And God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good" [Gen. i. 31].

Our studies in the sphere of Divine Providence, though necessarily limited in their range, and not admitting the exact and scientific method which we apply to physical phenomena, furnish ample evidence of the perfection of an administration which has its centre in the heart of an All-wise and All-loving Father. "As for God, His way is perfect" [2 Sam. xxii. 31]. "The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works" [Ps. cxlv. 17]. These are the principles on which the Divine economy is founded; and if their play cannot always be recognised, it can never be challenged. The words in which the passing wonder of the multitude found expression when some notable miracle had been wrought by Jesus of Nazareth embody the sober and intelligent judgment of the Church of all ages on the Divine rule: "He hath done all things well" [Mark. vii. 37].

But it is more particularly in the Scheme of Redemption that the perfection of the Divine character and administration is displayed. In the conception and carrying out of this Scheme

nothing was spared. This was with the Apostle an argument of overwhelming force. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all"—every word thrilling with significance—"how shall He not"—how is it possible but that He will—"with Him also freely give us all things" [Rom. viii. 32]? On this consideration alone one might fairly base the doctrine of the "Witness of the Spirit." For what was the object of the Scheme of Redemption? Was it not at least to restore fallen man to the dignity and fellowship and blessedness which he had forfeited? And what was the nature of that blessedness? Is it to be supposed that in the sacred fellowship of Eden, its happy tenants were left to infer the Divine favour from their sentiments and surroundings; that there was no direct intimation and assurance from God that He was well pleased with them? Was it not because that assurance was withdrawn that "Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord amongst the trees of the garden"? And could any scheme of recovery be considered as complete which failed to restore to fallen man the assurance which he had lost, the simple confidence, springing out of that conscious relation to God, which had been the charm of Paradise, and without which life must have lacked its supremest and most indispensable satisfaction?

2. No judicial system among men could escape the charge of inherent defect, which left a criminal in any uncertainty as to his conviction or acquittal at its bar. Or to make the analogy more exact, let us suppose the case of a rebel, convicted and condemned on a charge of high treason. His sovereign, against whom he has conspired, has a character for magnanimity and clemency. It is notorious, it is in fact a matter of proclamation, that it is his pleasure to pardon his

rebellious subjects, even though condemned, on their giving evidence of contrition. The convict is encouraged to appeal to the royal mercy. No answer is vouchsafed to that appeal. But as he waits in his gloomy cell, in a tumult of excited feeling, the subject alternately of hope and despair, the chains drop from his hands and his feet, the iron-barred door of his dungeon flies open, there is no warder to challenge his exit, and he goes forth into the sunshine and the fresh air, and the unfettered freedom of the outside world. But he is not happy. No sign or symbol of liberty is wanting. There can be no mistake as to the exhilarating breeze which gives elasticity to his limbs, and sends the warm blood coursing through a frame which imprisonment has robbed of its buoyancy. Yet he starts at every sound. Not a footstep falls upon his ear, but he shudders lest some officer of justice is on his track. The very sunshine grows almost hateful to him, and the uncertainty becomes more oppressive than the fetters which he has left behind. One thing he wants: without it the very brightness of his surroundings is a mockery. It is the sign-manual of his sovereign, certifying that he is forgiven, and that he is legally free. An administration which failed to provide its criminals with the attestation of their pardon, would lie open to the charge of injustice, if not of cruelty. Is it to be conceived then, do not our very instincts recoil from the assumption, that in the perfect administration of heaven, a penitent sinner, who has fulfilled the conditions on which the forgiveness of God is guaranteed, will be left without the direct authentication of his forgiveness? Well might it be said that if such a provision as this were removed from Christianity it would be a dead letter. Some such consideration as this must have inspired one of the most touching

and memorable passages in John Bunyan's vision. "As Christian came up to the Cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from off his back, and began to tumble, and so continued to do till it came to the mouth of the sepulchre, where it fell in;" and, as Bunyan adds, "I saw it no more. Then was Christian glad and lightsome, and said with a merry heart, 'He hath given me rest by His sorrow, and life by His death.' Then he stood still awhile to look and wonder, for it was very surprising to him that the sight of the Cross should thus ease him of his burden. He looked, therefore, and looked again, even till the springs that were in his head sent the water down his cheeks. Now as he stood looking and weeping, behold three shining ones came to him and saluted him with 'Peace be to thee.' The first said to him: 'Thy sins be forgiven thee.' The second stripped him of his rags, and clothed him with a change of raiment. The third set a mark on his forehead, and gave him a roll *with a seal upon it.*" "Then," says Bunyan, "Christian gave three leaps for joy, and went on singing."

3. The very essence of religious life and experience lies in the conscious relation of the soul to God,—a relation which, as I hope to show, cannot be realised, without some direct Divine communication. It is in the consciousness of forgiveness that the general relation of God becomes personal. The craving for forgiveness is a human instinct which nothing but a Divine response can satisfy. "Show us the Father," cried the disciples to their Master, "and it sufficeth us" [John xiv. 8]. They had read of Him in the sacred story. They had witnessed the manifestation of His power and goodness in His works. They had received yet further illumination from the teachings of their Lord concerning His

tenderness and love. The Fatherhood of God, in its picturesqueness, in the beauty of its general demonstration, had been most fully displayed in His teachings. But they were not satisfied. There was a Divinely implanted craving within them which no merely objective relation of the Father could satisfy. "Show us the Father," they cried,—as *our* Father, as related personally to *us*,—"and it sufficeth us." In that cry they were the representatives of human nature. They gave expression to the feeling which underlies all human aspiration after God. The revelation of God in the beauty and harmony of His works inspires my admiration, constrains my worship, but does not satisfy my heart. There can be no solid satisfaction—there may be elevated sentiment, there may be vague and visionary hope, there may be blind and even passionate devotion—without a direct revelation of God to the soul as the Father, loving and forgiving for Christ's sake. It is not sufficient that the seal of God should be on the Church to which a man is attached, or on the creed which he professes, or even on the method by which he has sought forgiveness. It is essential to assurance and peace that God's seal should be upon his soul.

4. A purely subjective religion, seeking and securing no verification of its genuineness, either by direct supernatural witness, or by a comparison of the feelings and fruits of life with some divinely constituted standard, would expose the soul to the peril of a wild and unbridled fanaticism. There is no extreme of infatuation, of mystical and antinomian extravagance, to which it might not lead. And even if some authentication were sought in the sphere of those sentiments and dispositions which are represented by Scripture as "fruits of the Spirit"—such authentication, resting on the

fallible judgment of the individual, could not but be arbitrary and precarious. It has often been objected that the doctrine of the "Witness of the Spirit" is promotive of enthusiasm. Similar objections have been laid against all doctrines which have encouraged a direct relation between the soul and God. I hope to show that the doctrine has an exactly contrary tendency. There can be no such guarantee against mystical delusion on the one hand, and fanatical presumption on the other, as that which is supplied by some such infallible attestation as the doctrine of the "Witness of the Spirit" involves. For a belief in this doctrine inexorably demands that a man shall accept no assurance of his personal relation to God, but such as is furnished by Him who, as knowing the mind of God, can alone certify the fact of their adoption to His children.

5. The Christian service assumes throughout a filial relation to God, distinctly and directly ascertained.

For whereon does the love of the soul towards God—that love which is its very life—rest? Is it upon the sentiment of admiration for One Whose works bear witness to His wisdom and benignity? Is it upon some grateful recognition of the Divine mercy in the redemption of the world? Is it even on some conviction of personal indebtedness to One Who has made it possible for every man to be saved? No true religion was ever founded upon any such basis. The soul's love of God rests upon the persuasion of a personal interest in God, as pardoning, as adopting, as fulfilling His promised mercy to the recipient. "We," not generically, as included in the Scheme of Reconciliation, but individually, as having had the scheme brought home to us, "love Him, because He first loved us" [1 John iv. 19]. "God may adopt you," says

Richard Baxter, "may give you that Spirit which He gives only to His children, and possess you with true filial affection towards Him, before ever you know yourself to be adopted."* Such a statement confutes itself. It involves a contradiction of terms. True filial affection can exist only where the filial relation is ascertained.

The love of God is the principle of all holiness, and the inspiration of all filial service. It lies at the root of true and implicit obedience, and is the strongest incentive to personal purity. The aspiration of the soul after the Divine image is not the prompting of ambition; it is not an impulse towards an ideal of moral beauty; it is the yearning of the soul's love to be like that which it loves. "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness" [Ps. xvii. 15]. How thoroughly true this principle is will appear from the consideration that holiness of heart is not always that which ministers to personal gratification, or commends its subject to the sympathy and admiration of others. The process by which it is reached is painful, its aspect is not always attractive, it is often misinterpreted, not seldom is it mistrusted. Yet men pursue and press towards this high prize of their calling; they are content to suffer, if they can apprehend it; they accept the bitter cup, they endure the thorn, they bear the cross, if they can be thus helped towards its attainment: and why? Because they feel that in seeking to be like their Lord, they are giving the fullest expression to the consciousness of their love for Him.

The perfunctory discharge of Christian duty does not fulfil its responsibility. Much of the service of the Christian life is directly filial. "He that loveth Me not, keepeth not My

* Baxter's Works: ix. 53.

sayings" [John xiv. 24];—the love of Christ is the principle of holy obedience. But whence springs that fruitful love? "If God were your Father," if there were in your hearts the consciousness of a filial relation to God, "ye would love Me" [John viii. 42]. Gallant and self-denying service might be inspired by devotion to a person, to a creed, to an ideal; but filial service, such as the service of the Christian life is, can be fully rendered only by a child, who is conscious of the relation. Profound indeed are the teachings which lie in the inspired charge: "Be ye followers of God, as dear children" [Eph. v. 1].

Not less closely is Christian hope identified with the filial relation of the believer to God. In proportion to the certainty of that relation will be the "assurance of hope." For the hope of the Christian is the hope of an inheritance, the hope which accrues through "the adoption of children;" which pertains not to the "children of disobedience," but to the "children of light;" the hope of an inheritance of which the Father makes us "meet to be partakers;" the hope to which we are begotten by the Father, to "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away" [Eph. i. 5; v. 6, 8; Col. i. 12; 1 Pet. i. 3, 4]. The drift of these passages cannot be mistaken. The heaven beyond —through the grace which invests us with the adoption of sons—is our inheritance *as such*. If children, *then* are we heirs; and until we know that we are children, by an evidence that is distinct and infallible, we cannot indulge with confidence the prospects of heirship. That hope alone which springs out of a divinely certified relation to God as His children is a hope which "maketh not ashamed."

But in no exercise of the Christian life is the conscious

filial relation more indispensable than in prayer. The prelude of all true prayer is "*Abba, Father!*" In the recorded prayers of the Incarnate Son—prayers recorded because of the light which they shed on our relation to the Father as well as His —there is a holy boldness of which His conscious Sonship is the natural interpretation. "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world" [John xvii. 24]. Nothing can surpass the conscious dignity, the holy boldness, of the Divine Intercessor. "I *will*,"—not I desire, I pray—but "I *will:*" such was the confidence with which the Beloved Son in His approach to the Father could invest His prayers when He pleaded for others; and it was His appeal to the Fatherhood of God that was His strong consolation when He prayed for Himself. "Abba, Father," He cried, in the exceeding sorrowfulness of Gethsemane, "all things are possible unto Thee: take away this cup from Me!" But that very word "*Father*" inspired a confidence which moved Him to recall the prayer as it trembled upon His lips: "Nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt!" [Mark xiv. 36]. When upon the Cross there was wrung from Him the cry of an agonised despair: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" But scarcely had these words escaped Him when He cried: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit!" and it is added with profound significance, "having said *thus*," having with that one word "*Father*" withered the forces of death, "He gave up the ghost" [Luke xxiii. 46].

So is our love made perfect, love springing from the consciousness of God's love to us, that we may have boldness;

for "there is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear" [1 John iv. 18]. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father!" [Gal. iv. 6]. "Ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father!" [Rom. viii. 15]. So it is the conscious filial relation, divinely attested and certified, that renders possible, while at the same time it inspires, that most touching and most comprehensive of prayers, consecrated to our use by the sublimest example: "ABBA, FATHER!"

6. The experience of the people of God in all times illustrates and confirms the position which I have taken.

In the earliest ages of which we have any record there is abundant evidence of the assurance of God's favour not only to nations and communities, but to individuals. Before their fall Adam and Eve lived in the unshadowed manifestation of their Creator's love. We learn on inspired authority that Abel "offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness (or rather, he had witness borne to him) that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts" [Heb. xi. 4]. Of Enoch it is said: "Before his translation he had this testimony (or he had witness borne to him) that he pleased God" [Heb. xi. 5]. A similar witness was borne to Noah, for God said to him: "Thee have I seen righteous before Me in this generation" [Gen. vii. 1]. Abraham had not only particular assurances of the Divine regard for him, but he was a partaker of that blessedness of which David speaks: "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered: Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" [Rom. iv. 7, 8].

Few will hesitate to believe that Jacob, whose new name was itself an attestation of Divine favour; that Moses with whom Jehovah spake "as a man speaketh unto his friend" [Ex. xxxiii. 11]; that Job, even though we should accept the criticism which divests the memorable passage, "I know that my Redeemer liveth" [Job xix. 25—27], of the sense that is generally assigned to it—that these men lived in the distinct and divinely attested persuasion of their acceptance with God. The striking chapter in the Epistle to the Hebrews which tells of the exploits of those ancient heroes of the faith, of whom the world was not worthy, closes with these remarkable words, which I quote from the Revised Version: "And these all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect" [Heb. xi. 39, 40]. By them the promises were only sighted and saluted from afar, as mariners sight the distant shore; but the witness of God's favour to them was their present compensation and their reward.

Not less ample is the evidence furnished by the era of the Prophets. In the august vision in the Temple, the fearful heart of Isaiah was cheered by the assurance, "Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged" [Is. vi. 7]. In his inspired prediction of the gladness of the faithful, he says, "In that day thou shalt say: O Lord, I will praise Thee; though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away and Thou comfortedst me" [Is. xii. 1]. Hezekiah, in his song of thanksgiving for recovery from the gates of the grave, declares, "Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back" [Is. xxxviii. 17]. In the vision of Zechariah the

angel of the Lord spake unto Joshua, the high priest, who had been clothed with filthy garments, "Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment" [Zech. iii. 4]. And the Book of Psalms is exuberant in the expression of a confidence which nothing short of a distinct Divine authentication could warrant.

In the ministry of our Blessed Lord upon earth the forgiveness of sin was graciously attested by His own word to those whom He healed, and to others whose privilege it was to come into contact with Him. After His departure, the Apostles distinctly and frequently professed the assurance of their personal acceptance with God. St. Paul says: "I know Whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day" [2 Tim. i. 12]. Again: "We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom we have now received the atonement" (or reconciliation) [Rom. v. 11]. "But now we are delivered (or rather have been discharged) from the law,"—the language surely of one who was consciously justified,—"that being dead (or having died to that) wherein we were held" [Rom. vii. 6]. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace," or "let us have peace," —either rendering serves the purpose of the argument, which rests mainly on the former clause, "with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" [Rom. v. 1, 2]. Not less conclusive is the testimony of St. John: "We know that we are of God; and the whole world lieth in wickedness." "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." "Behold what manner of love the

Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; *and such we are;*" this invaluable addition having been made to the text on the most unimpeachable authority [1 John v. 19; iii. 2; iii. 1].

This privilege, thus constantly and distinctly avowed by the Apostles, was not regarded by them as in any sense their peculiar prerogative. They clearly assumed that the grounds of their assurance were common to all believers in Christ; for in writing to the Churches they take it for granted that their readers were as conscious as themselves of the favour and forgiveness of God. They appeal to their actual experience. "Being then made free from sin ye became the servants of righteousness" [Rom. vi. 18]. "For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls" [1 Pet. ii. 25]. "Whom having not seen ye love: in Whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" [1 Pet. i. 9]. "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His Name's sake." "I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father" [1 John ii. 12, 13].

But I need not multiply quotations. It is clear that the Epistles of the New Testament would have been as unintelligible to those to whom they were originally written, as they would now be to us, on any other assumption than that they were written to those to whom the Christian life was a conscious experience; who were resting not on some theory of probability, but on a relation to God, through faith in His Son, clearly ascertained and certified.

To the evidence furnished by the early Church may be

added the evidence of eighteen centuries of Christian life. Not to cite even one of the myriads of testimonies of which our own history as a Church is full, I will content myself with two or three illustrations which are furnished by a Church which in recent times, at least, has taken up a position adverse to this doctrine. Three days before his death, "that he might receive a new assurance for the pardon of his sins," the good Bishop Sanderson partook of the Lord's Supper. "After the praise and thanksgiving for this blessing was ended," says Izaak Walton, "he spake to this purpose: 'I have now, to the great joy of my soul, tasted of the all-saving sacrifice of my Saviour's death and passion; and with it received a spiritual assurance that my sins past are pardoned, and my God at peace with me.'" * "Good doctor," said Hooker, the judicious, and even more, the saintly, "God hath heard my daily petitions, for I am at peace with all men, and He is at peace with me; and from that blessed assurance, I feel that inward joy which the world can neither give nor take from me." † And in the Journal of Henry Martyn I read: "After a long and blessed season in prayer I feel the Spirit of Adoption drawing me very near to God, and giving me the full assurance of His love." ‡ Now if it could be assumed that the unflinching courage and confidence of the "noble army of martyrs" was but the product of religious enthusiasm; if the triumphant death of generations of saints could be regarded as an illustration of an exceptional privilege, accorded in emergency—a supposition which would in itself endorse the general principle for which

* Bishop Sanderson's Works: vi. 348.

† Walton's Life of Mr. Richard Hooker.

‡ Memoirs, 99.

I am contending; no such exceptional prerogative, no such passing religious excitement, can be pleaded in the case of those myriads who in all ages of the Church, and in all circumstances of life, have maintained a serene and steady confidence in God; and who in the strength of that confidence have pursued their daily task, and borne their daily burden; passing often through deep waters and unenlightened mysteries; yet singing always "the Lord's song," and joying in the God of their salvation. To ascribe the religious convictions of generations of devout people—convictions professed by them, deliberately recorded in their journals, witnessed by the constancy of their lives—to enthusiasm, is not only to insult the common sense of men, but to cast grave discredit on the economy of God. It cannot be that the wise and loving Father should permit countless multitudes of His true-hearted and faithful children to become, and continue to the last, the victims of "strong delusion," that they should "believe a lie" [2 Thess. ii. 11].

From these considerations, apart from any distinct testimony of the Inspired Word, it may be reasonably assumed that the position taken at the outset of this argument may be maintained: that provision is made in the Scheme of Redemption for certifying to the believer in Christ the fact of his adoption into the family of God; and that, in the words of Mr. Wesley: "It is no absurdity to suppose that when God pardons a mourning, broken-hearted sinner, His mercy obliges Him to another act, to witness to his spirit that He has pardoned him." * We may go further than this; and assert with a living divine of our own Church that "it would be wrong to doubt that every Christian should expect the

* Wesley's Works: xii. 468.

Holy Ghost," or some accredited Representative of the Blessed Trinity, "to confirm distinctly the release from condemnation in the Mediatorial Court of Justice, the assurance of sonship in the Divine Family, and the conscious consecration of the soul in the Temple of God." *

II.—*The Holy Spirit of God is the Agent by Whom the fact of Adoption into the Family of God is certified to the believer in Christ.*

No such testimony as has been assumed could be authentic if it were not Divine. For all that we can know as to the nature of God, as to His purposes and dispositions, or as to His personal relations to ourselves, we are dependent on Divine revelation. Man, whatever the range of his intellect, or the compass of his spiritual instincts, cannot "by searching find out God." "The things of God"—the genitive is purely subjective—"knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God" [1 Cor. ii. 11]. The adoption of the believer in Christ is a Divine act; it takes place in the Divine mind. It may be accompanied by certain signs and followed by certain results, but no general description of the effects of that act on the heart and life of the believer can furnish an infallible assurance to the individual who is the subject of it. In such a case as the justification and adoption of a sinner, God must be by logical necessity the ultimate guarantee and source of all true certainty.

To the Third Person in the Holy Trinity the various revelations which God has been pleased to make of Himself, through His Son, whether in Creation, or Providence, or Redemption, are attributed throughout the Scriptures. In

* Dr. Pope's Sermons : 264, 265.

every dispensation He appears as the Agent and Administrator of the purposes and operations of the Triune God, and as the Interpreter to the Church and the individual of the deep things of God.

1. But while the Spirit is thus "the representative of all the revelations of the Holy Trinity," His function is more particularly that of bearing witness to Christ. In the words of a distinguished predecessor in this lectureship: "As the work of Christ may be summed up in manifesting the Father, so may the work of the Spirit be summed up in testifying of Christ." *

This testimony was not borne in the first instance on the Day of Pentecost. It pervades the Sacred History from the beginning. From among the numerous distinct notices of the presence and power of the Eternal Spirit which are to be found even in the Old Testament, it would be easy to select many striking illustrations of the exercise of this special function. To the Holy Spirit, for instance, is attributed the work of Creation. "By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth" [Ps. xxxiii. 6]. "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" [Gen. i. 2]. In one of the noblest passages of his prophecy, Isaiah, after describing the measuring of the waters and the meting out of Heaven with the span, the comprehending of the dust of the earth in a measure, and the weighing of the mountains in scales, and the hills in the balance, ascribes these stupendous operations to the Spirit, and cries: "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being His counsellor hath taught Him?" [Is. xl. 13]. To claim the work of the Spirit in Creation as

* Dr. Osborn's Fernley Lecture, 15.

a direct witness to the work of Christ might be somewhat hazardous; yet it would be no less venturesome to deny that in the processes of creation, the reduction of chaos to order, the bringing in of light, the development of life, the investiture of the whole with beauty, there was a foreshadowing of that new Creation, that passing "from death unto life," that turning "from darkness to light," that bringing forth of "fruit unto holiness," which are the characteristics of His work who says: "Behold! I make all things new." It is not without significance that while the first chapters of the Inspired Word describe the creation of the heaven and the earth, the last chapters tell of "a new Heaven and a new Earth," in which is "the throne of God and of the Lamb."

The Tabernacle in the Wilderness—"the Tabernacle of Witness"—and the Temple which succeeded it, with their furniture and decorations, were intended to symbolise, as indeed was the entire ritual of Judaism, the work of the Redeemer. The instructions given to Moses as to the building and furnishing of the Tabernacle were most minute. "According to all that I show thee," said Jehovah, "after the pattern of the Tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it" [Ex. xxv. 9]. For the carrying out of this work thus minutely specified, and thus profoundly significant and symbolical, technical skill, even of the highest order, was not sufficient. The resources of art and genius must be enriched by Divine inspiration, and so it is said of Bezaleel: "I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship" [Ex. xxxi. 3].

In the records of the building of the Temple we find several notices of the intervention of the Spirit. "All this," said

David, after an elaborate description of the materials to be used in the structure, "the Lord made me understand in writing, by His hand upon me, even all the works of His pattern" [1 Chron. xxviii. 19]. Further on we read: "Then David gave to Solomon his son . . . the pattern of all that he had by the Spirit" [1 Chron. xxviii. 11, 12]. The latter phrase has been rendered "in spirit," that is "in mind;" but such a criticism, of dubious value under any circumstances, in the light of the passage previously quoted is utterly indefensible. When the second Temple was erected, the Spirit of God is represented as having been most closely identified with the enterprise. The selection of men for the undertaking, the influence exerted upon Cyrus and Alexander, the readiness of the Jews to assist in the work, the successful issue of the whole are attributed to the Spirit of God, of Whom it is said, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts" [Zech. iv. 6].

Yet further: in the book of the prophet Ezekiel, eight chapters are occupied with a description of the vision of a Temple, distinguished by the same minuteness which marks the accounts of the building of the Tabernacle, and the Temple on Mount Sion. Whether this vision is intended to prefigure the second Temple, or to depict the beauty and perfection of the Church of Christ, is not determined. In either case, however, one principle is established: the Spirit of God is the guide and director; He prescribes all the outlines and all the details; and so bears witness to the glory of that Church of the Future, of which this vision is either directly or indirectly the prediction, and of which Christ is the Head and Lord.

But whatever the value of these illustrations, they by no

means exhaust, possibly they may not even represent, the Witness of the Spirit to Christ in the Old Testament. "We have a more sure word of prophecy." "Ye search the Scriptures," said the Master, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me" [John v. 39]. "The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy" [Rev. xix. 10]. "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you; searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" [1 Pet. i. 10, 11]. One further passage will more than suffice for attesting the relation of the Spirit to the Messianic predictions: "The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" [2 Pet. i. 21].

In the oracular utterances of the ancient Seers, in the sweet singing of the Psalmist, in the august visions of Isaiah, in the plaintive strains of Jeremiah, in the mystic revelations of Ezekiel, in the brilliant imagery of the Minor Prophets, the key-note, the theme of song, the motive of inspiration, is the work of the Redeemer. The whole story of the incarnate Son of God, in every point of detail, as well as in its grand and comprehensive issues, is anticipated by these holy men of God who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins" [Acts x. 43].

In the New Testament the function of the Holy Spirit as a Witness to Christ finds yet more abundant illustration. It

was when filled with the Holy Ghost that Elizabeth saluted Mary: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" [Luke i. 41, 43]. Under the same afflatus, Zacharias prophesied, saying: "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He hath visited and redeemed His people: and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David" [Luke i. 67, 68]. It was when the Holy Ghost was upon him that the aged Simeon, who had long looked for the consolation of Israel, and to whom it had been revealed by the Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ, sang that song which has been echoed from the death-bed of many a saint: "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel" [Luke ii. 29].

During the exercise of our Lord's public ministry, the relation of the Holy Spirit to Him as His witness is continually illustrated. The divinely appointed sign by which the Baptist was directed to discern the Messiah was this: "Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending and abiding upon Him, the same is He that baptizeth with the Holy Spirit" [John i. 33]. This sign was literally fulfilled: for at the baptism of the Lord, John "saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him" [Matt. iii. 16]. He opened His commission in the synagogue of Nazareth by laying claim to the fulfilment in Himself of the prophecy of Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to

preach the Gospel to the poor," &c. [Luke iv. 18]. To this anointing St. Peter referred in the house of Cornelius, when he taught "how that God anointed Him with the Holy Ghost and with power," and that as the result He "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil" [Acts x. 38]. The function of bearing witness to Him was distinctly assigned by the Lord Himself to the Holy Spirit, not only in the future, but in the present. "I have greater witness," He said, "than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given Me to finish, the same works that I do bear witness of Me, that the Father hath sent Me" [John v. 36]. Again: "The works that I do in My Father's name they bear witness of Me" [John x. 25]. These works He attributed to the Spirit: "I cast out devils by the Spirit of God" [Matt. xi. 28]. When His work on earth was finished, and He had offered Himself without blemish unto God "through the Eternal Spirit," He was "quickened by the Spirit" [1 Pet. iii. 18], and "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead" [Rom. i. 4].

Not less rich in the testimony of the Spirit to Christ is the apostolic history. The shedding forth of the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost was the seal of the Father on the finished work of the Son, "the last and crowning credential of the Faith." To the ministry of the Apostles God bare witness "both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost" [Heb. ii. 4]. The "mighty signs and wonders" which accompanied the preaching of St. Paul he attributes to "the power of the Spirit of God" [Rom. xv. 19]. To the same Spirit St. Paul ascribes the revelation to the "holy apostles

and prophets" of the mystery which in other ages was "not made known unto the sons of men . . . that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel" [Eph. iii. 5, 6]. And in one conclusive passage, St. Peter, after affirming the exaltation of Christ by the right hand of God "to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins," adds, "And we are His witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, Whom God hath given to them that obey Him" [Acts v. 32].

The history, the very existence of the Christian Church, is the permanent authentication to the world of the Divine mission of the Son of God. The credentials of that mission are furnished by the Holy Spirit. It is He Who summons men by a voice which they cannot ignore, and separates them to the ministry. He equips them for their holy vocation, and gives authority to their word. His power is exhibited in the conviction and conversion of sinners, in the holy life of the Church, in the inception and success of her enterprises, in the vigour of her services, and in the gracious issue of her prayers. He is the inspiration of her literature; it is He Who gives force to the whole body of evidences whereby she seeks to establish the authority of the Faith; and He invests all her organisations with vitality, blending His voice with hers in her appeal to the world: for "the Spirit and the Bride say 'Come!'" He, too, is "the Lord and Giver of Life," the secret spring of that inner growth of the soul, that going on unto perfection, that "liberty" in the exercise of which the saints, "with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image,

from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" [2 Cor. iii. 18].

This witness of the Spirit to Christ has a yet wider range. There is a light "which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." It played among the ancient faiths, lending to them, here and there, a more than human lustre. In no age of the world's history, in no tribe of the human family, has God left Himself "without witness." A yearning after God, after some revelation from heaven, after the forfeited fellowship of Eden, may be traced among all faiths and forms of worship. There is perhaps no human heart which has not its altar, though it be inscribed "To an unknown God." The universal unrest of the world in all ages is far deeper than political, or intellectual, or social. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain," waiting "for the manifestation of the sons of God" [Rom. viii. 19, 22]. By mysterious processes the world is being educated to receive the truth, "as the truth is in Jesus;" and though it may be impossible for us, as yet, to know how, or how far, it is equally impossible to cast away the hope that outside all Churches, beyond the range of holy enterprise, save so far as the prayers of the Church pervade all human life, some testimony of the Spirit is borne to the grace and sympathy and tender mercy of Him who is "the Desire of all nations." It is not too much to suppose that our Lord contemplated no narrower range of spiritual attestation than the vast circle of human need, when He said of the promised Paraclete: "He shall testify of Me."

2. In presence of these considerations,—it being clearly established that the function of bearing witness to Christ has

been assigned throughout the entire course of the Divine administration to the Holy Spirit,—it would not be unreasonable to assume, even if there were no direct evidence on the point, that a part of His work would be to bear that testimony to the soul of the believer, which of all the revelations which God can make to man is the most momentous,—which is indeed indispensable to the perfection of his happiness,—the revelation of personal forgiveness. If it were not the office of the Holy Spirit to bear any other testimony; if Divine revelation were conveyed through some other channel or by other means; this assumption might seem precarious; though it would be impossible to avoid the conclusion that by some method God would minister this comfort to His children. But the doctrine of the "Witness of the Spirit" assumes no special assignment of a function not otherwise exercised by Him; it assumes and illustrates only one phase of a ministry which is pre-eminently characteristic of the Third Person in the Trinity. He Whose mission it was to attest and authenticate the victory of the Redeemer by signs and wonders appealing to the eye, is discharging no new function when He certifies to the heart of the believer his personal interest in that victorious work.

The indirect evidence—if indeed it may be called indirect—which Holy Scripture furnishes in favour of this assumption is irresistible. On no other theory is it possible to interpret that wonderful cluster of passages in the farewell discourses of our Lord to His disciples, which refer to the gift of the Spirit on His own departure. For what else could our Lord intend His disciples to understand when He said: "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart

I will send Him unto you" [John xvi. 7]? It may be that we shall never fathom the meaning of that profound and wonderful word "Comforter." The Greek Fathers, following the Hellenistic usage of the verb from which it is derived, interpreted it as the "Consoler." The Latin Fathers, on the other hand, maintaining the usage common to classic authors, rendered it "Advocate." The same term is applied by St. John to Christ; and is rendered "Advocate" by the translators of our Authorised Version [1 John ii. 1]. But the word "Advocate," as commonly understood, does not represent the office of the Holy Spirit; nor does the word "Comforter" exactly reproduce the original term. The Revisers of the New Testament, appreciating the difficulty of rejecting a term so sacred in its associations, have retained "Comforter" in the text, but in the margin they suggest as alternatives "Advocate" and "Helper." Not one of these words, however, conveys the actual sense of the original; and it may be doubted whether any single term in the English language can be found to represent its full import. "If," as says Archdeacon Hare, "we understand the word 'Comforter,' not merely in its secondary and common sense as 'Consoler,' but in its primary and etymological sense as 'Strengthener' and 'Supporter,' it would be difficult to find any word in our language so well fitted to express a range of meaning corresponding to that embraced by the Greek *Παράκλητος*, although etymologically different." * Within that range of meaning—wide and varied and exhaustless as it is—it surely is not unreasonable to include some such function as that of conveying to the soul the unspeakable comfort, the gracious help, the blessed

* Mission of the Comforter, 311.

inspiration of a personal assurance of adoption into the family of God.

Light, much more precious than philology can furnish, is shed on this word by our Lord Himself. "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth" [John xiv. 16, 17]. This teaches us at the least, that whatever He had been to His disciples within the range of the meaning of that word "Comforter," during His intercourse with them on earth, the Holy Spirit, as in some sense His representative, would be after He had gone away. In His personal ministry they were to see but the prediction and the parallel of the work of Him whom He would send from the Father. The blessed assurance with which He had charmed away the fear and doubt of the penitent heart was not to be withdrawn; it was to be perpetuated. Instead of the assurance of a passing word it was to be that of an abiding witness. Through another medium, but not with lower authority, through all time, that blessed formula which it is "the universal prerogative of penitence to hear" was to be heard: "Thy sins are forgiven."

But our Lord goes beyond this. In the memorable passage already quoted—a passage prefaced by solemn words which were the evidence at once of the peerless value of the promised gift, and of the authority of the Giver—He said: "Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is expedient for you that I go away" [John xvi. 7]. The charm of His personal presence, of His voice, of His touch, was to be transcended. Something was to be given to them not only as precious, but more precious than His loving assurance was to Peter, to Thomas;—something more precious

than the "Neither do I condemn thee" was to the frail penitent on the Temple floor; more precious than the "This day is salvation come to this house" was to Zaccheus; more precious than the "Thy faith hath saved thee" was to the weeping outcast in Simon's house. What could be more precious; what could compensate for the loss of His presence; what could make it expedient for them that He should go away? Could it be anything less than the living, indubitable, abiding attestation of the Spirit of God to their adoption? Only thus could the promised Comforter be "another Comforter," not acting in His stead merely, but by blessed assurances supplementing His eternal work. Only thus could it be more blessed for them not to see than to see. Only thus could they enter upon the legacy which He bequeathed to them, when He said: "My peace—deep, untroubled, assured—I give unto you" [John xiv. 27].

Not yet, however, is the wealth of His promise exhausted. The Comforter Whom He would send, and Whose presence among them would secure to them blessings which even His own ministry had not furnished, was to be to them "the Spirit of Truth." He was to teach them all things; to bring all things to their remembrance whatsoever He had said unto them [John xiv. 26]. "He was to take," as He said "of Mine and show it unto you" [John xvi. 15]. In that day—in the enjoyment of that gift—He said "Ye shall know that I am in the Father, and you in Me, and I in you" [John xiv. 20]. Many things He had yet to say unto them; but they could not bear them then; but, said He, "Ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free" [John viii. 32]. The Spirit was to guide them "into all Truth" [John xvi. 13]. How can these promises,

bewildering in their suggestiveness, be explained? The public ministry of the early Church, of the Church of to-day, does not explain them. No revelations of new Truth appear in the teachings of the Apostles, or in their epistolary treatises. The Apostolic Theology is but the Theology of the Gospels, formulated and systematised. The germs of all Apostolic thought lie in the words and works of the Master. The Truth into which they were to be supernaturally led was clearly beyond the range of inference or intuition,—it was to be a truth which would confirm them, and all who should believe in Him through their ministry, in an allegiance which would be tested beyond the limits of merely human endurance. Is it unlikely, that in "all the Truth" into which they were to be led, that would be included which must have been more precious to them, as it is to us, than any other revelation?

For what if a man should "understand all mystery and all knowledge?" What if he should pass within the veil, into "the Holiest of all," and look with undazzled eye into the things which "the angels desire to look into?" What if with an intelligence wrought into supernatural intensity he should by searching "find out God," "find out the Almighty to perfection?" What even if he should penetrate and fathom the serene and mystic depths of that love which "passeth knowledge," that love which devoted the eternal Son to the death of the cross? Would any one of these revelations, would all of them put together, compare for one moment with the revelation to his own inner soul of God's love to *him*? "Tell me," cried Jacob to his antagonist, as he strove with Him till the breaking of the day, "Tell *me*, I pray thee, Thy name!" [Gen. xxxii. 29]. In that impassioned demand for a personal revelation of God to his soul,

he represented the intensest yearning of the human heart, and anticipated the promise which the Mediator of the better covenant made to His followers, and which in the gift of the Holy Spirit He so gloriously fulfilled.

3. The special relation of the Christian believer to the Third Person in the Holy Trinity gives additional weight to the argument involved in this doctrine. His is a spiritual life from beginning to end;—a life in which the Holy Spirit not only ministers, but is ministered. The Spirit strives with him from the early dawn of his intelligence. The Spirit convinces him of sin, of righteousness, of judgment. He is born of the Spirit, is led by the Spirit, walks in the Spirit, walks in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of God dwelleth in him; he is the temple of the Holy Ghost; he is filled with the Spirit; the Spirit helpeth his infirmities, and maketh intercession within him; the manifestation of the Spirit is given to him to profit withal; and he is strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man. His is the communion of the Holy Ghost. He is warned not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God; not to quench the Spirit; and the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him. Can it be possible that, touched as he is at every point by spiritual influences, from the dawn of life to the final hour, the Spirit of God, fruitful in consolation, the Lord and Giver of Life, taking of the things of God and showing them to the soul, inspiring with noble purposes, investing with supernatural strength, withholding in fact no good thing from him, should leave him in ignorance on the most vital question of his life? Surely the Holy Spirit who is the source of all Christian enlightenment, of every Christian endowment, and the principle of the Christian's life in its

blessed fulness and in its minutest detail, is the medium and agent of that Divine Revelation which bears witness to the soul of its adoption into the family of God.

4. There are many passages of Holy Scripture which, if not bearing direct and independent testimony to this doctrine of the "Witness of the Spirit," cannot but be regarded as furnishing substantial auxiliary evidence. One or two illustrations will suffice to indicate the profound wealth of support which this doctrine can command.

i. For instance: "Now we have received not the Spirit which is of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" [1 Cor. ii. 12]. The argument of which this passage forms a part is to this effect: God prepared for them that love Him things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man,—that is to say, according to Rabbinical phraseology, things which cannot be apprehended by the senses or by the intellect. Such things lie only within the ken of the Spirit: "for what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so, the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God" [1 Cor. ii. 11]; that same Spirit which "searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God" [1 Cor. ii. 10]; terms which point not only to what is abstract; not only to His rich and exhaustless and incommunicable fulness; but to His attributes, His thoughts, purposes, decrees; to all phases of His relation to man in general, and to men in particular,—phases not otherwise discoverable. This Spirit, says the Apostle, we received as a revealing Spirit, "that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."

In the same direction tend two well-known passages from

the First Epistle of St. John: "Hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us;" and "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit" [iii. 24; iv. 13]. With these passages compare another in the same Epistle: "Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him;" a passage which gains much by the clause taken from the following verse in the Revised Version, "Whereinsoever our hearts condemn us" [iii. 19]. If these passages mean anything, they surely mean that the child of God is certified that he is of the truth, that he is not deceiving himself; that the indwelling Spirit, the source of his spiritual life, is also its sure token and witness; and that such evidence is not objective only, gathered from the observation of external phenomena, but that it is specially subjective, having its seat and sphere in the heart, the centre of the emotions and the source of the activities of life.

Other passages from the writings of St. John—the Apostle of the subjective—illustrate the same doctrine. Such, for instance, are the passages which speak of the Christian "chrisma:" "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things:" and "the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him" [1 John ii. 20, 27]. The Holy One from Whom the anointing proceeds is Christ. The "chrisma"—that with which the soul is anointed—is the Holy Ghost. This chrisma is the token that we are in the Father and in the Son, children and heirs. Primarily, especially if the use of *χρίσμα* is set against the *ἀντίχριστοι*

named by the Apostle previously, this passage may be taken to indicate that "the Church is in a position to discern and detect anti-Christian error, down to its most subtle ramifications." * But that the passage has a wider scope appears from what immediately follows; the effect of this anointing is not merely that of inducing a capacity for distinguishing truth from error; it inspires the subject of it with personal confidence, so that he may await the manifestation of his Lord with boldness, and not be ashamed. The most subtle powers of discrimination between truth and error, the unhesitating persuasion of the general verity of Revelation, do not presuppose, much less do they guarantee, the personal confidence of the soul. Boldness in prospect of His appearing is the fruit only of the duly certified assurance of personal acceptance with God. And it is impossible to study these passages from St. John's Epistle without discerning in them a reflection, even in detail, of our Lord's discourse on the Comforter.

ii. Yet more explicit, if possible, are those passages in the writings of St. Paul, which relate to the "sealing" of believers by the Spirit of God. "In Whom (*i.e.*, Christ) also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory" [Eph. i. 13, 14]. Again: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" [Eph. iv. 30]. Yet further: "Who hath also sealed us," the reference is to the Father, "and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" [2 Cor. i. 22].

The Anglican interpretation which refers this sealing to

* Haupt: First Epistle of St. John

the act of Baptism, and "its immediate complement," Confirmation, will not commend itself to the unbiassed judgment. For while it is admitted that the original word is used by ecclesiastical writers in connection with Baptism, any special reference of this nature in the passage before us would be unintelligible, as being alien to the sense of the context. Far more worthy of acceptance is the interpretation that "the seal of the Spirit is that blessed hope and assurance which the Holy Spirit imparts to our spirit," that we are the children of God. *

The use of the passive in two of these passages is significant, as showing that the experience indicated does not proceed from the subject. The seat of it is the personal consciousness, but it is not developed from within; it is the act and gift of another. And the assurance of our right to the inheritance is conveyed after believing, so that the seal is something distinct from the act of faith; it is the immediate witness and testimony of the Holy Ghost, the assurance of a present adoption, and the earnest of a future inheritance.

iii. Yet higher rank in the department of suggestive evidence must be assigned to the remarkable passage in the fifth chapter of St. John's First Epistle. The controversy respecting the authenticity of the famous clause in the seventh verse, as to the record borne in heaven by the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost — a controversy now happily settled so far as pure scholarship is concerned—has no relation whatever to this argument. Neither the retention of the clause, nor its rejection, touches the point at issue. The whole passage as given in the Revised Version, reads thus: "This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus

* Ellicott: Ephesians, i. 13, 14.

Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and the blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three who bear witness, the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three agree in one. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for the witness of God is this, that He hath borne witness concerning His Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him" [1 John v. 6-10]. A passing reference may be made to the substitution of the objective "him" for the subjective "himself"—though the personal pronoun used in the original has in some cases a reflexive force. The reading of the text is a little doubtful; Lachmann and Westcott and Hort adopt *αὐτῳ*—the latter noting *αὐτῳ* in the margin,—while Tregelles and Tischendorf read *αὐτῳ*. But whatever the reading adopted, the context seems to render necessary a reflexive interpretation. For after the distinct and emphatic exhibition of the Spirit as the Witness, it would be strange indeed if that witness should be represented as *in* the Son of God.

The detailed exegesis of the passage is confessedly difficult. Its general spirit, however, can scarcely be misunderstood. The central idea is that of the *μαρτυρία* which pervades the writings of St. John. But how are we to explain the three forms of testimony which combine to make up "the witness of God"? It is hopeless to seek for any explanation in the fact recorded by St. John in his Gospel: that one of the soldiers who was present at the crucifixion of our Lord pierced His side with a spear, and that straightway there came out blood and water [John xix. 34]. Much has been made of the fact that the writer of the Epistle is the only Evangelist who records this remarkable phenomenon. But

this is probably a coincidence, and nothing more. No relation need be traced between "the most perplexing incident in the Gospel," and "the most perplexing passage in the Epistle." Some profound and mystical meaning may lie in the incident itself; but there is no reason to suppose that St. John had the incident in his mind when he wrote his Epistle. For if so, he would not have reversed the order of the phenomenon as described in his Gospel. Besides, whether we regard the Spirit here as representing the visitation at Pentecost, or more generally as pervading the life and history of the Church with His testimony to Christ, it is not to be supposed that the blood and the water which came from the body of the Lord are to be regarded as co-ordinate in the function of the witness of God with the Holy Spirit.

Quite as hopeless is the interpretation which refers these terms "water and blood" to the Sacrament of Baptism and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. For not only is such an interpretation open to the objection just advanced, that the Sacraments would thus be raised to a dignity co-ordinate with that of the Holy Spirit; but it is entirely irrelevant to the obvious drift of the passage: "This is He that came by water and blood; not with the water only, but with the water and the blood." Is it not clear that the water and the blood are here referred to as "constitutive factors in the life of the Redeemer;" that, taken in connection with the Spirit which beareth witness, they point to the three occasions on which the Father bore testimony to His Son: the water recalling the Baptism, with the Divine attestation which accompanied it, the blood suggesting the Sacrifice on the Cross, which was also associated with supernatural attestations; and the Spirit referring to the miraculous phenomena

of Pentecost, which were the seal of the Father's satisfaction in the work of His Son? These three, the water, the blood, the Spirit in His gifts, are "the three great factors in the Gospel;" they recall the most significant and characteristic acts of the Gospel history; and they form together "the witness of God." And when the soul of man, encouraged and persuaded by this testimony, ventures to cast itself on the Divine mercy as revealed and assured in Christ Jesus, the testimony "no longer remains an outward object of thought, to be contemplated and grasped;"* the objective becomes subjective; that which the mind has apprehended passes into the experience; and "he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." If there could be any doubt as to the purport of the witness thus realised, it would surely be dispelled by the consideration not only of the general design of the Epistle, and of the frequency of St. John's appeals to the inward witness of believers, as a fact obvious to themselves and fruitful of most blessed results; but more particularly by the consideration of the words with which the Apostle's argument closes: "These things have I written unto you, *that ye may know that ye have eternal life*, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God" [1 John v. 13, Revised Version].

5. The doctrine which I have endeavoured to illustrate by passages which more or less directly endorse the position which I have taken, is not dependent for its authentication on inferences drawn from analogy or from the comparative teaching of Holy Scripture. It is distinctly affirmed that the witness of the believer's adoption into the family of God is borne to him by the Holy Spirit, and that this is one of the

* Speaker's Commentary, in loco.

special functions which the Spirit sustains in the Divine administration.

This is clearly the teaching of St. Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians. In his memorable argument on the distinction between the two Covenants, he thus concludes the contrast: "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, (or, *that* ye are sons, it being a matter of doubt whether the particle is demonstrative or causal), God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your (our) hearts, crying, "Abba, Father" [Gal. iv. 4-6]. The adoption of either the causal or demonstrative sense of the particle does not affect the argument. The "Abba" cry is the attestation, as well as the inspiration of adoption.

The same doctrine is developed with even greater fulness in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. It is significant that this chapter begins with the assertion: "There is therefore now no condemnation (no *κατάκριμα,* or sentence of condemnation) to them which are in Christ Jesus" [ver. 1]. It is also a matter of great moment that in the passage cited from the Epistle to the Galatians, as well as in that which I am about to quote, the Apostle does not content himself with laying down a theory, or elaborating an argument: he appeals to the personal experience of his readers.

The passage reads thus: "Ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself (or Himself) beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" [Rom. viii. 15, 16]. In this passage there

is a distinct development and expansion of the doctrine involved in the passage cited from the Epistle to the Galatians. That which appears there by implication is here asserted: that the Holy Spirit of God is a Witness, and that the sonship of believers is the fact to which He testifies.

The particular terms of these two passages, which are of unspeakable value in this study, I reserve for consideration at a later stage. The passages themselves, independently and apart from any interpretation which may be given of their details, clearly and decisively affirm the position that the Holy Spirit of God is the Agent by Whom the fact of adoption into the family of God is certified to the believer in Christ.

III. *It would appear, then, from the direct testimony of Holy Scripture, as well as from arguments founded upon other considerations, that some witness of the believer's adoption into God's family is borne to his heart, and that the Agent of this witness is the Holy Spirit of God.*

These principles have been admitted in all ages, and more or less by all sections of the Christian Church. But it must not be assumed that the interpretation of the doctrine of the "Witness of the Spirit" has always been uniform. On the contrary, so various have been the opinions of the Church on this question, that it is almost impossible to classify them with any degree of distinctness.

i. With the representatives of the extreme Sacerdotal school, who deny that any direct communication of the Spirit is made to the heart of the believer, and admit no sort of assurance but that which is ministered through priestly absolution, I hold no argument at all. For no argument is

possible. The assumptions of this school have no basis, either in Scripture or in Reason; they are grounded only on perverted interpretations and worthless traditions. Every instinct of loyalty to the One Divine Mediator revolts against the man, or the system, that would plant a priest or a Church between me and my God.

Many theologians, however, who have little sympathy with an extreme Sacerdotalism, hesitate, on various grounds, to admit the possibility of the attainment by the soul of any certainty as to its acceptance with God. To some, every theory of religious consciousness savours of "hysterical pietism." They regard the profession of such consciousness as a phase of fanaticism. Others hold that the doctrine of assurance involves a dangerous presumptuousness, and encourages an unhallowed attempt to interpret the mind of God by the standards of human feeling. Others, again, teach that any such assurance is out of place in a system of probation, as tending to relax the soul's proper vigilance, and to invest it with a confidence at once rash and perilous. And not a few, from morbid views as to the essential impurity of the human heart, affirm that it is impossible that, in this stage of life, it can ever attain to any absolute certainty as to its relation to God.

ii. A second school of thought, while admitting the doctrine of the Spirit's witness, denies that this witness is direct and independent. A distinguished representative of this school, the learned Bishop Bull, whose sermon on the "Witness of the Spirit" Mr. Wesley characterises as "full of gross perversions of Scripture, and manifest contradictions both to Scripture and experience,"* thus defines the doctrine: "The

* Clarke's Wesley Family: ii. 210.

Spirit of God produces those graces in us which are the evidence of our adoption. It is He who, as occasion requires, illuminates our understanding and assists our memories, in discerning and recollecting those arguments of hope and comfort within ourselves. But God's Spirit doth witness with, not without, our spirits and understandings, in making use of our reason in considering and reflecting upon those grounds of comfort which the Spirit of God hath wrought in us, and from these drawing this comfortable conclusion."* Thomas Scott, the commentator, follows in the same strain: "The Holy Spirit by producing in believers the tempers and affections of children, as described in the Scriptures, most manifestly attests their adoption into God's family. This is not done by any voice, immediate revelation, or impulse; or merely by any text brought to the mind; for all these are equivocal and delusory; but by coinciding with the testimony of their own consciences. . . . So that whilst men are examining themselves as to the reality of their conversion, and find Scripture evidence of it, the Holy Spirit, from time to time, shines upon His own work, excites their holy affections into lively exercise, renders them very efficacious upon their conduct, and thus puts the matter beyond doubt; for while they feel the spirit of dutiful children towards God, they become satisfied of His paternal love to them."† Similarly Richard Baxter: "The Spirit witnesses first and principally by giving us those graces and workings which are our marks, and then, secondly, by helping us to find and feel those workings or marks in ourselves; and then, lastly, by raising comforts in the soul upon that discovery." Baxter further furnishes certain grounds of probability, by the knowledge of which, without

* Bull's Works: ii. 41. † Thomas Scott's Commentary: Rom. viii. 16.

any other assurance, we may live "in much peace and comfort." Such are the nature of God, the mediatorial office, the universal sufficiency of Christ's sufferings, the general tenour of the promise and offer of pardon and salvation, the comparison of our case with that of others, and the present frame and inclination of our soul.*

The fallacy of this, and kindred theories is, that they practically reduce the testimony of the Holy Spirit to the testimony of our own spirit. They confound the operations of the Holy Spirit with those of our own intellect, so that the witness, in direct contradiction to the teaching of Scripture, is but one. For, as Richard Watson says: "Though another may assist a witness to prepare and arrange his evidence," as this theory represents the Holy Spirit as doing, "there is still but one deposition and one deposer." If the "Witness of the Spirit" be the "fruits of the Spirit," with the judgment of the soul thereupon, then there is no direct witness of the Spirit at all. †

iii. A third view confounds assurance with faith, regarding assurance as of the essence of faith; so that to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ is to be certified of acceptance with God through His name.

Two things may be inseparable which are not identical. Salvation is inseparable from Faith, but it is subsequent to it. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou *shalt* be saved." The death of Christ made it possible that all men might be brought into union and fellowship with God, but it did not actually bring them into that state. The Gospel of the grace of God declares that all men *may* be saved, but it

* Baxter's Works: ix. 53.

† Rev. R. Watson's Works: xi. 261.

does not bear witness to any man that *he is* saved. The assurance of personal salvation, that God for Christ's sake actually receives and adopts me as His child, comes from another source.*

The act of faith is no evidence of forgiveness; for faith has its exercise only in Divinely authenticated verities, and not in speculative contingencies. Faith is human, assurance is Divine. Faith in an unauthenticated conversion, in a change of heart lacking the Divine certificate, is not faith, but fanaticism. I may believe that God will for Christ's sake pardon my sins. I may even venture to believe that, on the fulfilment of Divinely imposed conditions, He has pardoned my sins; but my faith can deepen into conviction only when He tells me that I am forgiven. If it had been stated in the Word of God that in every case pardon is dispensed when repentance and faith have reached some definite degree; if that degree were so clearly indicated that it would be possible to ascertain without doubt whether or not it had been reached; and if, further, we were distinctly authorised to be ourselves the judges of the case, so as confidently to realise the fact of our justification; then the act of faith might be taken as an evidence of forgiveness. But "no such particular description of faith" is furnished in Scripture; we are not authorised to constitute ourselves the judges of the fact of our adoption. The act of justification is an act which passes in the mind of God; it is secret, invisible, and without outward sign; and it is impossible for us to know "whether the act of pardon, as to us, has passed the mind of God." † The Holy Spirit, Who

* Rev. C. Prest: Witness of the Spirit, 37.

† Rev. R. Watson's Works: xi. 262, 263.

only knows the mind of God, and to Whom the function of revealing the things of God to us has been assigned, can alone disclose to us the fact that God accepts us as His children.

iv. A fourth theory admits the direct witness of the Holy Spirit of God, but only as a special privilege, conferred on favoured individuals, or at critical times.

1. The true and competent answer to all who deny, or doubt, or attenuate the doctrine of the Witness of the Spirit, lies in the passage already cited from the Epistle to the Romans; a passage so full and so unequivocal that I should be content to rest the doctrine solely on its teaching. "The Spirit itself," or as the Revised Version reads, "the Spirit Himself," a rendering more intelligible to the general reader, and in perfect accordance with the Greek idiom, "beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God."

The use of the personal pronoun in conjunction with "the Spirit," and its position in the original, is most significant. It is not "the same Spirit;" neither is it "He, the Spirit;" it is "the Spirit Himself," the Spirit on His own part, expressive not only of the importance and preciousness of the testimony, but of its directness and independence. "The Spirit Himself," as directly and distinctly as though there were no other evidence, "beareth witness . . that we are the children of God."

That a direct witness of the Spirit of God to the human soul is possible no one will doubt who is prepared to admit the Divine Omnipotence, or the sensibility of the soul to impression from without. The principles of spiritual action are too recondite for complete investigation; but their phenomena are universally patent. There is not an hour of our lives in

which we are not acted upon and impressed by subtle influences external to ourselves. And it is as unphilosophical as it is irreverent to assert that the Divine Spirit, in Whom "we live and move and have our being," is incapable of directly informing and controlling those whom He has made and whom He ever sustains. "He that made our souls in His own image and likeness, can easily find a way into them." "It concerns us," says Jeremy Taylor, "in the maintenance of the dignity of our nature, to say that the Spirit of God can inform our soul, as well as our soul can inform our body."

The whole theory of temptation involves the agency of subtle and invisible powers, directly suggesting doubts, and evil surmisings, and desires after the forbidden. No lesson stands out more distinctly from the mysterious record of the forty days and forty nights spent by our Lord in the wilderness than that of the direct action of the great enemy of our souls. However that solemn transaction may be interpreted, it is impossible to evade the significance of the clear and reiterated appeals of the Tempter to the Lord. Nor is it within the domain of evil influences alone that the soul is the subject of direct impression. The sentiment of a profound thinker and divine surely expresses more than a passing fancy: "Unclothed and unbodied spirits may converse with us by secret illapses while we are not aware of them. I doubt not but there are many more Divine impressions made upon the minds of men, both good and bad, than are ordinarily observed. There are many soft and silent impulses, gentle motions, like our Saviour putting in His hand by the hole of the door, soliciting and exciting men to religion and holiness."*

* John Smith's Select Discourse, 648.

But we are not limited to theory or conjecture in discussing the doctrine of the direct action of the Holy Spirit upon the heart. It is admitted by all that it is the Spirit Who convinces "of sin, of righteousness, of judgment." How is this conviction wrought in the heart of the sinner? We are not left to infer from the testimony of our own evil works, or the convictions of our own conscience, that we are sinners before God. If we were, we should not be found penitent and broken-hearted at His feet. "Conscience," says Hare, "has no power to convince sinners of sin. When she is uttering her most righteous words she often is only casting pearls before swine."* Conviction is brought home to the heart by the direct action of the Holy Ghost. Is it then unreasonable to conclude that He who is a Spirit of bondage is also with equal directness a Spirit of adoption? He is said to "strive with man." Can it be supposed that His work is only detective, that He is only a Minister of Justice, only the Remembrancer of an outraged law? Is His mission only to break down, and never to build up; only to picture to us the terrors of evil-doing, and never to minister the gentle consolations of mercy? Does He by direct and unmistakable action awaken in me the conviction that I am a child of wrath; and when under His guidance I have returned to my Father, does He withhold from me the blessed assurance that I am His child? Are we to be taught by the Spirit, led by the Spirit, filled with the Spirit, in fellowship with the Spirit, and is it impossible that He should ever say to us what the Master so often said to those who kneeled at His feet: "Thy sins are forgiven"? Surely He who begins the good work is able to complete it, inspiring not only conviction and contrition,

* Mission of the Comforter, 46.

but the fulness of knowledge, the fulness of faith, the fulness of hope.

It is affirmed by those who hesitate to admit the doctrine of the direct Witness of the Spirit of God, that the only and sufficient witness provided in the economy of grace is one of inference, drawn from considerations of the character of God, or from statements found in His Word, or from the fruits of the Spirit as exhibited in our lives; and that the Witness of the Spirit implies no more than a Divine guidance and illumination whereby the soul is led to draw such conclusions as may assure it of the favour of God.

That there is a witness of our own spirit is readily admitted; for not only is this the clear teaching of the passage in the Epistle to the Romans, but it is more or less directly involved in the numerous passages which refer to the testimony of the conscience, which is practically identical, though not strictly so. "Our rejoicing," says the Apostle, "is this, the testimony of our conscience" [2 Cor. i. 12]. "I say the truth in Christ; I lie not; my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost" [Rom. ix. 1]; where it must be noted that the witness of his conscience is subordinate to the Holy Ghost. But this witness of our own spirit, though invaluable, must not be exalted at the expense of that higher and Diviner Witness, without which its testimony would be fallible and precarious indeed. The witness of our own spirit may be concurrent and conjunctive, but it is not co-ordinate.

This is clearly the sense of the passage under review, which speaks of a direct communication of the Spirit of God to the spirit of man. The Vulgate rendering is significant, "the Spirit Himself beareth witness *to* our spirit." This rendering

is adopted by Luther and other critical authorities. Even Mr. Wesley ventures to say that "the Apostle is so far from speaking of the testimony of our own spirit only, that it may be questioned whether he speaks of it at all." But in a sermon published some twenty years afterwards, he deliberately expresses the conviction, founded on more mature judgment, that the passage in question speaks of two witnesses "who together testify the same thing—the Spirit of God and our own spirit." * This is probably the correct interpretation. There is no example, either in the Bible, or in classical or patristic literature, from which it may be assumed that the compound verb of the original is identical with the simple form. But there are examples of the use of the verb which imply a concurrency of testimony, in which one witness is direct, and the other indirect and confirmatory. That this is the meaning of the Apostle is apparent from the fact that he refers to a witness the effect of which is purely subjective. It is not a united witness borne to the outside world to the fact of our adoption into the family of God, but a witness *to* and *in* as well as *with* our spirit, prompting us to cry, "Abba, Father." [Note A]. And it is to the direct testimony of the Holy Spirit to our spirit that the witness of our own spirit owes its authority. For as Archbishop Trench says, "God's justification of a sinner is not merely a word spoken about a man, but a word spoken to him and in him; not an act of God's, immanent in Himself, but transitive upon the sinner." † The adoption of the soul is an act of God involving a change in our relation to Him. That act can be certified only by God Himself. He must pronounce the absolving decree; and then "the love of God," that is the

* Wesley's Works : v. 126. † Trench's Miracles, 202. 1846.

love flowing from the conscious sense of adoption, "is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" [Rom. v. 5].

If there were no authority for affirming the direct witness of the Spirit of God, such a witness would seem to be essential. For no inferential evidence, however clear and various, could possibly prove satisfactory. It is true that there are certain criteria, certain fruits of the Spirit, from which a probable inference as to our adoption may be drawn. But such a basis of confidence must ever be uncertain and precarious. No such inference could warrant assurance. For, granting the evidence of certain graces which betoken the Divine life; granting the fulfilment of certain conditions on our part, to which justification and adoption are inseparably attached; "the impossibility of knowing in what measure these graces must exist in order to constitute a sufficient evidence of a change of state," the need of some "direct communication from the Holy Spirit of God to assure us that we had adequately performed those conditions," would inevitably involve the soul in doubt and uncertainty, its very sincerity standing in the way of a favourable conclusion.* If the knowledge and assurance of forgiveness be not directly communicated by Him, with Whom that forgiveness originates, and Who alone can testify to its certainty, the soul can have no objective security whatever. And that it has not, the unassured and shadowed life of many thousands of Christians who do not regard the Witness of the Spirit as the privilege of their faith only too sadly affirms.

A religious life dependent for its confidence on mere inference would always be exposed to those fluctuations

* Rev. Daniel Walton: Witness of the Spirit, 41, 43.

which constitution and temperament encourage. Some impressions of the mind are healthy; some are morbid; some are presumptuous. In some cases the premisses on which the soul founded its judgments would be false; or the process of reasoning would be unsound; or the reasoner himself prejudiced and incompetent. For, as a rule, no man is an infallible judge of his own feelings or actions. A tender conscience, a diffident estimate of one's own character, a morbid tendency, would rob the truest soul of peace; while, on the other hand, a native buoyancy of disposition, a sunny temperament, an indulgent conscience, would interpret the most equivocal evidence in its favour. The sensitive soul would be the victim of every passing cloud, while the brightness of the religious life would be the prerogative of the sanguine. That on the most vital question the soul should be left to a testimony so precarious and inconstant is not to be believed. For "we are not sufficient of ourselves, to think anything of ourselves:" to adopt any independent conclusions, or to draw any infallible inferences:—"Our sufficiency is of God" [2 Cor. iii. 5].

There must be many cases in which any inference, drawn either from a general description of the character of God, or from the graces and operations of the Holy Spirit in the heart and life, is simply impossible. If the assurance of forgiveness, and the joy and peace in believing which accompany it, are dependent on a process of inference, how may the case of a new convert be explained, who in a moment passes from death unto life, and is filled with joy unspeakable? In such a case—and happily the history of the Church abounds with illustrations of sudden conversion—there is no time for inference; there are no premisses from which it may be

drawn; there is no room for reasoning. Upon the darkness of a life of sin and separation from God there is a sudden day-break; the mourning of the penitent is turned into praise; old things pass away and all things become new. The work is instantaneous; its suddenness admits no logical calculations; there has been no time for the bringing forth of such fruits of the Spirit as might suggest an inference; and the phenomena are capable of no other explanation than that which is furnished in the Word: "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" [Gal. iv. 6].

A further and fatal objection to the doctrine of mere inference arises out of the fact that the very marks which are supposed to attest a man's adoption into the family of God, such as the love of God, joy in God, peace with God, hope in God, are all subsequent to and dependent on the witness of the Spirit; they cannot exist but as fruits of that witness; for it is out of the manifestation of God's love to us that our love to Him, that love which is the inspiration of the holy life, springs. "We love Him, because He first loved us" [1 John iv. 19]. It is the consciousness of the need of reconciliation that drives us to the mercy-seat; and until the fact of our justification is certified to us, it is impossible that we can have such "joy and peace in believing" as are provided for the faithful; impossible that we can cherish in our hearts the love of God as reconciled to us, while we have a trembling fear of Him as a Judge. There can be no such experimental acquaintance with Christ as the fruits of the Spirit involve without His direct illumination as to the fact that God for Christ's sake has pardoned our sins.

Whatever value, therefore, we may attach to the witness of our own spirit,—and such witness, when confirmatory of the immediate and antecedent witness of the Spirit of God, is invaluable,—it is clear that there can be no infallible assurance of adoption apart from the direct testimony of the Holy Spirit to the heart. The fact of our belief, whatever its issues, is not, and cannot be, the ultimate source of certainty. No secondary knowledge produced by inference from effect to cause can usurp the place of that immediate and Divinely inspired knowledge which is essential to our satisfaction and peace. No testimony of the graces and operations of the Spirit can be substituted for the testimony of the Spirit Himself. The "Abba" cry is not the inspiration of logic, but of the Holy Ghost. No syllogism can authorize the decree which God alone can pronounce: "Thy sins are forgiven thee!"

2. As I have already intimated, the Witness of the Spirit of God, as being distinct from and higher than all subjective inference and conclusion, is necessarily antecedent to the witness of our own spirit. For the true foundation of all love to God is the persuasion which the believer has of the love of God to him.

The various terms which are used to indicate the Divine operation in conversion,—Justification, Adoption, Regeneration,—are generally treated as identical, representing but different phases of the same act of God. Some distinction and precedence, however, must be admitted in the order of thought. Before the new life of the sinner can be said to begin he must be released from condemnation; he must be justified. Justification therefore takes precedence in the order of thought. Then follows adoption; and the witness

of this, according to the canons of Methodist theology, though it does not actually produce the regenerate life, is the Divine instrument in Regeneration. "The self-same testimony," says Dr. Hannah, "ascertains the relationship, and instrumentally produces the real change in the believer." * This statement is not, perhaps, entirely free from objection, though the points involved are almost too subtle for definition. The firstfruits of the Spirit are love; but it is difficult to conceive of these without assuming the priority of the new life. In the wonderful parable which illustrates the conversion of the soul, from the standpoint of the Father, there is an order of events which is at least significant. When the prodigal was sighted from afar, the Father had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. Then he ordered the best robe, and the ring, and the shoes, and the festal preparation; and then, when these emblems of his new position had been indicated, he publicly acknowledged the sonship of the wanderer: "For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found" [Luke xv. 24]. Whatever light this parable may shed on the relation which the witness of the Spirit of adoption sustains to the act of Regeneration,—and I am quite aware of the precariousness of a too detailed interpretation of parabolic teaching,—there can be little question as to the antecedency of the Divine Witness to the witness of our own spirit. The former Witness is in no sense reflex. It is not, as Meyer argues, that the subjective self-consciousness, "I am the child of God," is met by the accordant testimony of the objective Spirit: "Thou art the child of God"—the latter being the yea, the confirmatory attestation to the former.† It is the Spirit of God who utters

* Lectures on Theology. † Meyer's Commentary: Romans viii. 16.

and inspires the "Abba" cry. The reflex act of our own spirit follows the Divine attestation.

All this Mr. Wesley puts with characteristic logical incisiveness. "That this testimony of the Spirit of God must needs, in the very nature of things, be antecedent to the testimony of our own spirit, may appear from this single consideration: We must be holy of heart and holy in life, before we can be conscious that we are so; before we can have the testimony of our spirit that we are inwardly and outwardly holy. But we must love God before we can be holy at all, this being the root of all holiness. Now we cannot love God till we know He loves us. And we cannot know His pardoning love to us, till His Spirit witnesses it to our spirit. Since, therefore, this testimony of His Spirit must precede the love of God and all holiness, of consequence it must precede our inward consciousness thereof, or the testimony of our spirit concerning them." * In estimating the value of this argument it must be borne in mind that the love of God which the Holy Spirit reveals to us is not general, but special and particular. In the Divine Word, in the administration of Providence, in the impressive story of the Cross, we may discover the love of God to man—to the human race in general. But there is no passage of Scripture which tells me that *my* sins are forgiven; which brings home, without a special attestation, the truth, *God loves me.* There may be an intellectual perception of the truth, when there is no experience of it. It is the persuasion of the Father's love to us in our individual adoption that elevates the heart, and bears fruit in the life.

3. But while independent of and antecedent to all objective

* Wesley's Works: v. 115.

testimony, the direct Witness of the Spirit of God is accompanied always, to a greater or lesser degree, by the indirect evidence of the fruits of the Spirit. The Spirit's witness, in other words, is not only distinct and immediate, it is conjunctive and concurrent.

It has been a favourite allegation of those who deny the doctrine of the direct Witness of the Spirit of God, that the belief of such a doctrine encourages the worst forms of enthusiasm, leading on inevitably to Antinomianism and fanaticism. There might be some ground for this allegation, if the holders of the doctrine had ever been guilty of ignoring, or even depreciating, the confirmatory evidence which is furnished by the sincere and holy life. But no such charge can be honestly made. For the doctrine of the Witness of the Spirit involves the fruits of the Spirit. We contend that there can be no real testimony of the Holy Spirit which is not followed by the "fruits of the Spirit," inasmuch as the fruits of the Spirit spring immediately from His testimony. "Let none ever presume," says Mr. Wesley, "to rest in any supposed testimony of the Spirit which is separate from the fruit of it." *

While, however, it would be venturesome indeed to rest in any supposed testimony of the Spirit which is not confirmed by corresponding fruit, no less would be the danger of accepting any supposed "fruits of the Spirit" as independent evidence of adoption. All evidence apart from a Divine testimony falls short of satisfaction on the momentous question of our adoption into the family of God. Clearly as the criteria of the new life are distinguished in Scripture, so numerous and varied are the devices of Satan, and so strong

* Wesley's Works : v. 133.

is the tendency of the human heart to self-deception, that the Holy Spirit must not be excluded even from the testimony of our own spirit. We need the clear light of His teaching and guidance to be shed on our life, in order that we may discern what is truly of His operation. There can be no effectual guarantee against natural presumption and Satanic delusion, save in the concurrent witness of His Spirit with our spirit that we are the children of God.

4. No strict definition is given in Holy Scripture of the method by which this direct Divine witness is borne to the heart of the believer in Christ; but we may assume that, as the operations of the Divine Agent in conversion are varied in different individuals, so is it with the method of that Divine attestation which accompanies conversion.

Not only from the records of conversion in the New Testament, but more particularly from our Lord's striking illustration of the work of the Spirit, it may be inferred, that though the result in every case is uniform, the method of producing it is inexplicable, and the attendant circumstances may be almost infinitely diversified. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof,"—this, as bearing upon the Spirit's witness, is of great moment—it is real and ascertainable, though not explicable,—"but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: *so is every one that is born of the Spirit*" [John iii. 8].

Following in the track of this illustration, Mr. Wesley says: "The manner how the Divine testimony is manifested to the heart I do not take upon me to explain. . . . But the fact we know, that the Spirit of God does give a believer such a testimony of his adoption, that, while it is present to the soul, he can no more doubt the reality of his sonship than he can

doubt of the shining of the sun while he stands in the full blaze of his beams." And again, in substance: "The Spirit of God does not testify by any outward voice. Neither does He always apply to the heart one or more texts of Scripture. But He so works upon the soul by His immediate influences, and by a strong though inexplicable operation, that the stormy wind and troubled waves subside, and there is a sweet calm, the heart resting as in the arms of Jesus, and the sinner being clearly satisfied that God is reconciled, that all his iniquities are forgiven, and his sins covered." *

While it would be vain to attempt any definition of the Divine method of bearing witness to the soul,—a witness which is silent, secret, and inexpressible,—a mystery which is more easily apprehended by those in whose heart it works, than it can be described or expressed by those who have it not,—a sealing "not always accompanied by certain demonstrations and kinds of assurance which many require, and will not take comfort without them;" † and while, further, it would be perilous to adopt any standard of an operation which is necessarily as varied as it is mysterious; it is happily possible to define the nature of the witness itself, both from the teachings of Scripture and the testimony of personal experience.

Among those who hold the doctrine as it is held by the Methodists,—and there is an innumerable company outside the Methodist Church, and included in all churches, who do so hold it,—there is not only a wonderful consensus as to the doctrine itself, but as to the very phraseology of its definition. It is represented as "a powerful energy of the blessed Spirit, first witnessing God's love to us, and then shedding abroad

* Wesley's Works: v. 117, 125. * Dr. Pope's Sermons, 263.

and increasing the love of God in our hearts;"* as "a gracious hint or intimation given to the soul by God, assuring our hearts and consciences of His favour and love towards us, and of our atonement, and reconciliation with Him through the blood of His Son;" † as "a direct, perceptible, unequivocal testimony, spiritual and satisfactory, relating to the believer's adoption, distinguished from any disposition or affection of mind which the adopted person may feel;" ‡ as "a satisfactory and joyful persuasion, produced by the Holy Ghost in the mind of a believer, that he is now a child of God;" as "a satisfying persuasion and feeling of God's pardoning love," which He diffuses through the soul, "and thus banishes our shy distrust of Him, silences our fears, subdues our painful anxieties, and fills us with a grateful sense of our unspeakable obligations to His redeeming goodness;" § as "a comfortable persuasion or conviction of our justification or adoption, arising out of the Spirit's inward and direct testimony."

Admirable as these definitions are, they are, if possible, excelled in clearness and Scriptural correctness by the definition furnished by Mr. Wesley, which ever has been and must be the Methodist Confession of Faith with regard to this doctrine. "But perhaps one might say, desiring any who are taught of God to correct, soften, or strengthen the expression, the testimony of the Spirit is an inward impression on the soul whereby the Spirit of God directly witnesses to my spirit that I am a child of God; that Jesus Christ hath loved me and given Himself for me; and that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God." ‖

* Lucas: Inquiry after Happiness. † Horton: Romans viii.
‡ Dr. Adam Clarke. § Dr. Bunting's Sermons: ii. 75.
‖ Wesley's Works: v. 115.

These simple yet carefully chosen words, only less precious than the Divinely inspired words of which they are the happy paraphrase, were written in the maturity of manhood; and they represent convictions founded upon much thoughtful study and blessed experience. Some of Mr. Wesley's earlier opinions, conceived in the enthusiasm of youth, he lived to modify, and even to reject. In regard to others, he was honourable enough to confess a growing uncertainty. But it was not so with this formula of his faith. Rehearsing these words, in the ripeness of his intellect and experience, he said: "After twenty years' further consideration I see no cause to retract any part of this. Neither do I conceive how any of these expressions may be altered, so as to make them more intelligible." *

5. It may be asked: How is it possible to distinguish between the witness of the Spirit as thus defined, and mere impressions of the senses, or presumptuous mental calculations?

Mr. Wesley's answer to this question is somewhat curt. "How may one who has the real witness in himself distinguish it from presumption? How, I pray you, do you distinguish day from night? How do you distinguish light from darkness, or the light of a star, or a glimmering taper, from the light of the noonday sun? Is there not an inherent, obvious, essential difference between the one and the other?" And he goes on to say that "to require a more minute and philosophical account of the manner whereby we distinguish these, and of the criteria, or intrinsic marks, whereby we know the voice of God, is to make a demand which never can be answered; no, not by one who has the deepest knowledge of God." †

* Wesley's Works: v. 125. † Ibid. v. 121.

It is true that just as the believer's adoption "belongs to a class of facts existing beyond the sphere of sense," the inward evidence which accompanies belief in Christ is "phenomenally distinct from that which results from any other persuasion whatever."* The man who has this witness in himself cannot explain it to the man who has it not. It is precisely one of those things which the natural man cannot know; it must be "spiritually discerned." Yet unquestionably there are certain tests by means of which the Spirit's witness may be freed from all suspicion either of presumption or mistake, and distinguished from "impulses, fancies, and wandering lights." "That you may know the voice of the Spirit of God from the carnal confidence of our own spirits," says Richard Sibbes, "inquire what went before, what accompanieth it, what followeth after this ravishing joy."†

This witness of the Spirit, for instance, is always preceded by true and hearty repentance, the distress of which it soothes, the tears of which it dries up. It is vouchsafed in answer to that simple faith in Christ which is the condition of the soul's adoption into the family of God. It is associated only with that self-renunciation, and that abandonment of sin which are essential to fellowship with God. It is only bright and vigorous when the soul is healthy, rendering to God a full-hearted service and devotion. It is never found where the ordinances are neglected, where relish for the Divine Word is not felt, where prayer is withheld, and where the soul is not "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God." The reality of it may be gauged by its effects. For

* Stanley Leathes : Boyle Lecture, 130.

† Sibbes' Works : v. 443.

wherever this Spirit of the Lord is, "there is liberty" [2 Cor. iii. 17]. It silences all objections, it scatters all temptations, it banishes all scruples and doubts as to its certainty, and sets the heart fully at rest. It inspires gratitude, confidence, purity, praise. It kindles zeal, it promotes high and holy aspiration, and qualifies for submission. And in no respect is its authenticity more triumphantly vindicated than in the purely filial reception of the Divine discipline which it induces, and which finds expression in such words as these: "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" [John xviii. 11].

It is among such considerations as these that a competent answer may be found to the ancient but not yet exploded charge, that the doctrine of the Witness of the Spirit encourages Antinomian indifference. It is "upon the foundation of this immediate testimony of the Holy Spirit" that all conviction as to Christ and His work finally rests. It is the inspiration of the full and final consecration of every faculty to God. No more potent incentive to entire consecration can be conceived than that which arises out of the Divine attestation of adoption into the family of God. "If children, then heirs!" Who can measure the force of such an attestation upon a man's moral convictions, upon his principles, upon his estimate of his responsibilities, upon the growth of the newly-planted scorn and hate of sin within his heart? For this witness is not to be regarded as a mere matter of feeling; it is one the whole inward and outward efficacy of which must be taken together. Profoundly suggestive are the words of St. John: "Every one that hath this hope in him (or set on him) purifieth himself, even as He is pure" [1 John iii. 3]. Not less suggestive are the

words of St. Peter: "If ye call on Him as Father, . . . pass the time of your sojourning in fear, knowing that ye are redeemed not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, . . . but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ" [1 Pet. i. 18, 19, Revised Version].

6. To enumerate all the blessed results which flow from the Witness of the Spirit would be to rehearse the whole catalogue of the graces and privileges of the Christian life.

But the testimony of the Spirit is specially indicated as pertaining to "the adoption of sons." He is "the Spirit of adoption," the Spirit bearing witness to adoption, "whereby we cry: Abba, Father!" Into the quaint and curious explanations of this singular combination of the Aramaic with the Greek word which have been furnished, it is not worth our while to enter. The cry itself, which in the parallel passage in the Galatians is represented as His cry, while in the passage in the Romans it is described as our cry,—both statements being harmonised by the fact that it is not at His instance, or through Him, but in Him, as "an indwelling and pervading power," "as the containing and enveloping presence," that the cry is uttered,—this cry, betokening "joyous confidence, in contrast with trembling despondency," involves the simplest, and, at the same time, the intensest expression of our religious life. It represents the profoundest reverence, the profoundest confidence, the profoundest affection. It is the first utterance of the holy life in its dawn; it is the ripe fruit of its maturity. Never does the true Christian experience fall below this; never does it pass beyond it. It is never less than this; it is never more.

It may be the expression of varying degrees of affection; it may represent a shallower or a deeper confidence; but, as in the earthly life of our Blessed Lord, the word "Father" was the keynote of His first recorded utterance, and of His last [Luke ii. 49; xxiii. 46], so does this cry express and interpret the whole life of the redeemed soul, from its inception to its final fruition. It is the cry of the frail child of earth and of the glorified saint in heaven.

But it is more than a cry. For "if children, then heirs," heirs not only of a purchased inheritance of which we have at once the earnest and pledge, but "heirs of God," not as belonging to Him, but as inheriting Him. In Him we inherit all things; "all beams of comfort in the creation are derived from this Sun; all streams of delight in other things are conveyed from this Spring."* "The testimony of our conscience," says Smith, "is, if we damp it not, our continual feast. But the testimony of the Spirit is a superadded taste out of God's right hand, as it were a piece of Heaven in the soul." "When true assurance comes, heaven itself will appear upon the horizon . . . like a morning light, chasing away all our dark and gloomy doubtings before it. . . . . It is the budding and blossoming of felicity, the inward sense and feeling of the true life, sweetness, and beauty of grace."† Not without significance as to the new relation of the soul thus certified of its adoption into the family of God is the change of terms in the original of Romans viii. 14-16. Those who are led by the Spirit of God are said to be "sons of God," *υἱοὶ Θεοῦ*. They receive "the Spirit of adoption," *πνεῦμα υἱοθεσίας*. But when the Apostle proceeds to speak

* Horton: Rom. viii.

† John Smith's Select Discourses, 449, 450.

of the testimony of the Spirit to this adoption, the terms *υἱοὶ* and *υἱοθεσία* seem to recede into the background, as though they represented only a legal relation. So the Spirit's testimony is that we are "the children of God," not *υἱοὶ* only, but *τέκνα,* a term of profounder tenderness, as expressing a relation not only of position, but of nature.

One of the profoundest of German theologians thus graphically sums up the manifold fruits of this Divine testimony. "The ripened, vital, child-like receptivity, and the holy living fulness of love now strike in the inmost centre of the personality a new-creating spark of life, and he who was apprehended by preventing grace now apprehends and possesses. Appropriated Christianity may now work what it will, the new consciousness, the Divine adoption, indeed the new being, the new creature. The eternal atonement, reaching down to the deepest foundation of the conscience, is now found. Living in time, the believer knows himself to be now living in the eternal life, knows the heavens open above him, and in the heavens his Father. Out of a doubting and divided being he has now become in his innermost nature one. For he participates in Him who is in His Person the principle of the union of all oppositions in the universe. He knows himself to be united with the centre of all truth in heaven and on earth, and has now found the most precious treasure, — religious certainty of the Christian salvation." *

7. There is no countenance given by the doctrine of the Witness of the Spirit to the Calvinistic view of the assurance of final and unconditional salvation.

* Dorner: Christian Doctrine, 153.

The doctrine of assurance, as held by Mr. Wesley, involves an assurance "on the ground of which no relaxation of religious effort can be pleaded, and no unwatchfulness of spirit or irregularity of life allowed." * He knew nothing whatever of an assurance of final perseverance and of an indefeasible right to heaven—a theory which has driven many to give up the doctrine of assurance altogether. He was careful to distinguish between the assurance of present and the assurance of future salvation, and ultimately he abandoned the use of the term as being ambiguous and unscriptural. "Assurance," said he, "is a word I do not use, because it is not Scriptural." †

In this assertion, one instance among many of that profound critical insight which anticipated the philological decisions of more recent times, Mr. Wesley was probably correct. The Old Testament usage of the word contributes little to the argument. In the New Testament the word occurs six times; in four of these [Col. ii. 2; 1 Thess. i. 5; Heb. vi. 11; x. 22] the same word is used in the original. This word does not necessarily include the idea of assurance; it is by no means certain that such a meaning can possibly be assigned to it; and even if it could, it would be difficult to establish any identity between it and what is implied in the Witness of the Spirit. The Revisers, with a natural hesitation as to the rejection of a term which is so closely interwoven with ecclesiastical traditions, have in one instance, rendered it "assurance," with "fulness" in the margin. In another instance they translate the same word by "full assurance," again placing "fulness" in the margin. But

* Rev. R. Watson's Works: v. 175.

† Wesley's Works: xii. 473.

in the two passages in which the word occurs in the Epistle to the Hebrews, they render it by "fulness," relegating "full assurance" to the margin. The translation "fulness" has the authority of the Vulgate, Wiclif, Tyndale, in two instances, and Cranmer, with a considerable number of distinguished scholars of more recent times. [NOTE B].

It is obvious that a term which, to say the least, is ambiguous in its meaning, cannot be pressed into any controversy in favour of the doctrine of final perseverance. Under any circumstances the use of it is unadvisable, not only because it has no direct Scriptural sanction, and because it encourages a perilous confidence, but because it "shuts out all those lower degrees of persuasion which may exist in the experience of Christians." * We rejoice in hope, which may be fuller or feebler in proportion to our faith, but we do not rejoice in security. Our witness is to a present adoption; it is not to the certainty of a final inheritance. The fulness of understanding, the fulness of faith, the fulness of hope, of which the Apostle speaks, are fruits of the Spirit arising out of the Witness which He continually bears to the believer, but they are not to be confounded with the Witness itself. They represent advanced stages of Christian intelligence, confidence, and expectation, but they do not involve the faintest evidence of an infallible certainty of perseverance. Such a certainty may spring from a perverted or presumptuous judgment; it is not warranted by any attestation of the Spirit of God.

8. Finally, the Witness of the Spirit as thus defined is the common privilege of all believers at all times.

Nothing in the passage from the Epistle to the Romans,

* Rev. R. Watson's Works: xi. 254.

which is the sheet-anchor of this doctrine; nothing, indeed, in any passage of Holy Writ, warrants the theory that the privilege was confined to the Apostolic circle or the Apostolic age—a miraculous accompaniment of the Church's transition from the servile to the filial state, from the Mosaic to the Christian economy. In no instance is the privilege cited as a symbol and seal of Apostolic authority, or as one of those supernatural gifts with which the Church was endowed in the rudimentary age of her life. On the contrary, the privilege is represented as the common prerogative of faith; it is classed with other "privileges of a private and personal character arising out of its ordinary saving operation;" and it "cannot be proved to have belonged to any specific period, without admitting that the enlightening, justifying, corrective, and sanctifying process of the Gospel belonged also exclusively to that time."* If it be granted that the Apostles received the Witness of the Spirit of Adoption, it may be inferred that the same privilege is open to all believers. For whatever special relation they sustained to the first publication of the Gospel,—whatever necessity there was that their mission should be miraculously authenticated before the eyes of the world,—their relation to God Himself was that of every Christian believer, with whom in respect of purely spiritual gifts they had all things in common. For "the Spirit's highest function, that of revealing Christ in all His offices to the believer, is discharged with perfect impartiality towards every soul."†

The theory that the Witness of the Spirit is only an occasional privilege reserved for hours of strong temptation, or

* Rev. C. Prest: Witness of the Spirit, 28.

† Dr. Pope's Sermons, 287.

profound sorrow, or for the article of death, has no warrant, either in Scripture or in reason. "He that believeth on the Son of God *hath* the witness in himself," coincidently and coextensively with his belief. No mental peculiarity can hinder the Divine manifestation; no moral disqualification for its enjoyment can exist in the soul of one who is justified and accepted of God. It is the witness of sonship, pertaining not to distinguished sons, or aged sons, or to sons in affliction, but to sons as such, whatever their outward circumstances, or the complications of their inner life. "Because ye are sons," and for no other reason, and to attest no other fact, and to awaken no other consciousness, "God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Equally conclusive is the teaching of the passage so often quoted: "The Spirit Himself beareth witness," a witness that is present and habitual, and not "bestowed upon the induction of the believer into the Christian state, and occasionally revived to cheer in sorrow, to strengthen in temptation, or to prepare for death." *

The fallacy of any other theory lies in the fact not only that it is impossible to regard any moment of the Christian life as being free from emergency, but also, as I have endeavoured to show, in the inability of the soul to discharge the duties of life in the full and filial spirit without the inspiration of this Witness. If this testimony be but fitful and inconstant, so also will be the service which it constrains.

It is not denied that the witness may be enjoyed with varying degree, according to the circumstances and tempera-

* Rev. C. Prest: Witness of the Spirit, 107.

ment of the individual, there being "diversities of administration," the "self-same Spirit dividing to every man severally even as He will." It may also occur in the same individual with varying intensity, sometimes dimmed, or even wholly excluded by acts of unfaithfulness, by weakness of faith, by unwatchfulness of spirit, by omission of duty, by restraining prayer; or again shining with unclouded light and clearness in the hour of devout fellowship and holy consecration. It may be, too, that this testimony is more vividly borne in the hour of need; because sorrow, sickness, solitariness realise truth; because they render the soul more sensitive and susceptible; or because the Father would provide some unwonted manifestation of His love for the solace of His child in special straits; but whatever may be the exceptional provision of the Divine mercy and sympathy, it is the express teaching of the Word that the Witness of the Holy Spirit to the adoption of the believer into the family of God is the privilege of all, and at all times, and in such a degree as may suffice for their assurance and comfort. "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" [John viii. 12].

Such is "the Witness of the Spirit." Such too is the testimony of the Church respecting it from the earliest times. The Apostolic Fathers and their successors; the greatest divines of the mediæval Church; the Reformers, the Puritans, the Nonconformists of all shades of opinion, profess substantially the same faith. [NOTE C]. In its defence, and more happily still in the personal experience of its joyous assurance, the noblest names in the history of religion unite. Under its holy inspiration the sufferer has accepted his Divinely appointed burden with cheerful acquiescence, the toiler for God

has bravely attempted the most perilous enterprises, and the martyr has given his body to be burned.

It is true that the doctrine as we hold it is not held by some who "profess and call themselves Christians;" by not a few in whose creeds and catechisms and theological standards it is nevertheless distinctly taught. And there are many whose difference from us is rather a difference of phraseology than of principle—the differentiating lines of our thought are but faint. But we must not be misunderstood as affirming, or even assuming, that those whose views are distinct from ours; who do not accept the doctrine of the "Witness of the Spirit" as an article of their creed; who do not claim it as the privilege of their faith, or who, claiming it, have as yet failed to realise it; are destitute of spiritual life, or are deliberately defrauding the Holy Spirit of "the glory due unto His name." On the contrary, we are persuaded that vast numbers of holy men, whose piety no one may challenge, live and die without any such absolute certainty of acceptance with God as we have indicated. But we believe that they are living beneath their privilege; that there is a "glorious liberty" which they have not asserted; that their joy in believing, often rich and fruitful, might be incomparably richer and more fruitful, if they would claim for themselves with unfaltering trust that prerogative of faith which we have ventured to claim. But we have no controversy with them. We rather rejoice in the prospect of being "glorified together" when we no longer "see through a glass darkly, but "face to face;" when we no longer "know in part," but "even as also we are known."

To those who venture to affirm that we are mistaken; that there is no such certitude as to the favour of God as we pro-

fess; that our faith on this question is the relic of an enthusiasm pardonable indeed in an age of religious excitement and transition, but altogether out of date in times of religious intelligence; our answer is simple and straightforward: "*We speak that we do know.*" It is altogether beside the mark for men to deny the facts of *our* experience. They may challenge the accuracy of our interpretation, they may impugn our critical judgment, they may denounce our conclusions; but they cannot with any show of reason affirm that what we unhesitatingly declare to be a matter of personal life and feeling is a delusion. They cannot by any authority either of logic or common sense, annul and cancel the experience of eighteen hundred years of Christian life. "That which we have seen and heard declare we." "Our fellowship," ascertained and authenticated by the Holy Spirit of God, "is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" [1 John i. 3].

It would seem as if in the wisdom of God the enunciation and profession of this precious privilege of the common faith were specially committed in these times to "the people called Methodists." The Holy Spirit, Who from among "diversities of gifts" has ministered this one to us, has also signally honoured our faithful maintenance of the trust. It cannot be doubted that as we have let this light shine, so in proportion have men, seeing our good works, glorified our Father which is in heaven; and so, too, in proportion, "walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost," have we been multiplied. To the Church, as well as to the individual, is borne the witness of the Divine favour and acceptance. If we are true to our mission, the infallible signs will attend our public work and

services, as truly as they authenticate our personal faith; and in the revolving cycles of our history that inspiration will be vouchsafed to the living Church which was the consolation of the dying Wesley, as the sunrise of the everlasting morning broke among the shadows of failing heart and flesh: "THE BEST OF ALL IS, GOD IS WITH US!"

NOTES.

[Note A.]

The passage from Mr. Wesley's first sermon on the Witness of the Spirit, only a portion of which is cited on page 58 of this lecture, reads thus: "I cannot but desire all those who are for swallowing up the testimony of the Spirit of God in the rational testimony of our own spirit, to observe that in this text (Rom. viii. 16) the Apostle is so far from speaking of the testimony of our own spirit *only*, that it may be questioned whether he speaks of it *at all*, whether he does not speak *only* of the testimony of God's Spirit. It does not appear but the original text may be fairly understood thus." After quoting the Greek text, he proceeds: "the preposition σύν only denoting that He witnesses this *at the same time* that He enables us to cry, Abba, Father." "But," he adds, "I contend not; seeing so many other texts, with the experience of all real Christians, sufficiently evince that there is in every believer both the testimony of God's Spirit, and the testimony of his own, that he is a child of God."

This view of the text, which was subsequently modified by Mr. Wesley in his second sermon on the Witness of the Spirit, is not without supporters. It is sustained by many of the Fathers; by the Vulgate: *Ipse enim Spiritus testimonium reddit spiritui nostro quod sumus filii Dei;* by Luther: *Derselbe Geist gibt Zeugniss unserm Geist, dass wir Gottes Kinder sind;* and by Grotius, Koppe, Rückert, Reiche, De Wette, and others. Lange, though he does not determine definitely in favour of any view, seems to lean to that which the Vulgate indicates. In his note on the passage he says: "The σύν, though it be not a mere simple prefix, does not always signify the equality of two different parts in one function. Sometimes it denotes the effect (συνάγω, συναθροίζω), and sometimes the conjoint conclusion of the act specified in the verb with a kindred fact (συνίημι). This is the case here." Alford boldly translates the passage: "The Spirit itself testifies *to* our spirit," and affirms that the σύν in composition does not refer to τῷ πνεύματι ἡμῶν, but to *agreement in the fact*, as in *contestari, confirmare.* And Godet, while careful to

maintain that the preposition in the compound verb should preserve its natural meaning, "bears witness conjointly with our spirit," claims that "the dative, *τῷ πνεύματι ἡμῶν, to our spirit*, is not to be regarded as the regimen of *σύν, with:* it is our spirit which here receives the Divine testimony."

For the concurrence of the two witnesses the critical testimony is overwhelming. Philippi contends that there is no example to prove that the compound is identical with the simple verb: it is "*una testari*, to bear witness along with." Bishop Wordsworth, who, with Philippi, fails to recognise any direct assurance, maintains that "the Holy Spirit witnesseth, together with our spirit, by the fruits of the Spirit." Meyer holds that the Spirit "unites His own testimony that we are children of God with the same testimony borne by our spirit, which is the seat of our self-consciousness." Dr. Gifford, in the *Speaker's Commentary*, contends for "a twofold but united testimony." Dr. Sanday, in *Bishop Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers*, speaks of "this concurrent testimony." Dr. Vaughan also favours the theory of "a concurrent testimony with that of our own spirit;" and Mr. Moule, in the admirable series of the *Cambridge Bible for Schools*, says: "The Spirit of Adoption witnesses with a witness which concurs with a witness borne by our own spirit." Bengel's note on the passage is characteristic: *Spiritus noster testatur: Spiritus Dei ipse una testatur cum spiritu nostro.* In confirmation of this general consensus, Dr. Pope says: "The Holy Ghost does not in His testimony supersede conscience; He honours that ancient representative of the Divine voice within man, and never disjoins His evidence from that of the subjective moral consciousness which condemns or approves according to the standard of law written on the heart, or the conscience objective." (*Compendium of Theology*, iii. 121). These, and many other authorities which might be cited, confirm abundantly the conclusion which Mr. Wesley adopts in his second sermon on the Witness of the Spirit: "It is manifest here are two witnesses mentioned, who, together, testify the same thing: the Spirit of God and our own spirit."

St. Paul's use of the compound verb as implying concurrent testimony is sustained by the other passages in the New Testament in which the word occurs, Rom. ii. 15; Rom. ix. 1; and Heb. ii. 34, where the double compound bears substantially the same sense. The reading in Rev. xxii. 18 is too doubtful to be used in evidence. The Lexicons generally unite in the same interpretation. Parkhurst, whose authority is not of much weight, thus explains the verb: "to

bear witness also, together, or at the same time ; either absolutely, as Rom. ii. 15 ; or governing, like the simple verb μαρτυρέω, a dative of the person to whom the witness is borne. Thus it is plainly used Rom. ix. 1, 'my conscience also bearing me (*i.e., to me*) witness.' And in the same sense the verb followed by a dative case seems to be used in the famous text, Rom. viii. 16: 'the Spirit itself bears witness at the same time (viz., that we cry Abba, Father) *to* our spirit.'" Glass (*Phil. Sac.*) admits that the preposition in composition maintains the signification of *cum ;* but adds, "*quandoque tamen aliud, vel nihil etiam significat ;*" and he cites Rom. vii. 22, Acts xii. 12, and other passages as illustrations. Similarly Schleusner, and even Stephens, who affirms that while σύν in composition adds strength and grace to the verb, "*nonnunquam vacat, et ornatus causa additus est.*" But a careful examination of all the instances in which the compound verb occurs in the New Testament convinces me that the preposition is never entirely otiose.

Many passages might be cited from classical writers in confirmation of the view that the compound verb implies the existence of at least two witnesses, who concur in their testimony, "both witnessing the same thing, and the one, by his testimony, confirming the authority of the other." See Euripides: *Hippolytus*, 286: *Iphigenia in Aulide*, 1,158; Xenophon: *Hellenica*, iii. 3, 2, vii. 3, 35; Sophocles: *Philoctetes*, 438. The verb is used absolutely in Sophocles, *Electra*, 1,224, and Thucydides, *Hist.* viii. 51. But though there are a few passages in which the verb is not followed by a dative of the person in concurrence with whom the testimony is borne, I have met with no instance in which the compound verb has merely the sense of its simple form.

[Note B.]

In Blunt's Dictionary of Doctrinal and Historical Theology, under the head of Assurance, I find the following: "Out of the word πληροφορία, or rather out of the word as rendered by the Authorised Version, a doctrine has been developed which substantially assigns to truly converted persons a perfect assurance of peace with God, that is, of present pardon and future salvation. This tenet prevails chiefly among the Methodists, and those sections of the religious world which take their colour from the teaching of Wesley."

While not charging the writer of the above with wilful misrepresentation, it is impossible to hold him guiltless of an ignorance which, under the circumstances, is culpable. The Wesleyan doctrine of the Witness of the Spirit is not developed out of the word πληροφορία, nor does the Wesleyan theology admit the doctrine of the assurance of future salvation. In none of our theological standards can any ground be found for such a statement. On the contrary, Mr. Wesley not only makes an "important distinction between assurance of present, and assurance of future salvation" [Watson's Works, v. 7], but, as we have seen, he discards the use of the word "assurance" altogether: "Assurance is a word I do not use, because it is not Scriptural." Mr. Watson, than whom no writer of the Methodist or any other church has discussed the question of the "Witness of the Spirit" with greater force and clearness, thus expresses his view of the word 'assurance:' "Perhaps the expression of St. Paul, 'the full assurance of faith,' and 'the full assurance of hope,' may warrant the use of the word; but as there is a current and generally understood sense of this term among persons of the Calvinistic persuasion, implying that the assurance of our present acceptance and sonship is an assurance of our final perseverance, and of our indefeasible title to heaven, the phrase 'a comfortable persuasion or conviction of our justification and adoption, arising out of the Spirit's inward and direct testimony, is to be preferred" [Works, xi. 254]. In commenting upon those passages in the Epistles in which πληροφορία is used, Mr. Prest, in his very admirable treatise on the "Witness of the Spirit" [p. 196], says: "These Scriptural expressions denote the full persuasion and confidence of the understanding in the truth of God; the full and confident exercise of faith in the mercy and grace of God through His Son; and the co-existent, as full and undoubting, expectation of everlasting life; but they do not countenance the opinion of infallible assurance and certainty of perseverance unto the end." And Dr. Pope, far from regarding the doctrine of the Spirit's Witness as developed from the word πληροφορία, and as involving an assurance of future salvation, thus interprets the words of the Apostle: "He speaks of three kinds of full assurance: that of faith, that of hope, and that of the understanding. In one sense these three are various forms of the same thing, the sure conviction of the reality of the objects personally trusted in, hoped for, and apprehended in knowledge" [Prayers of St. Paul, 214].

These quotations dispose of the statement in Blunt's Dictionary as to the development of the Wesleyan doctrine of the "Witness of the Spirit" out of the word πληροφορία, and as to the belief of the Wesleyans in any assurance of future salvation. But as to the term itself: was Mr. Wesley justified in discarding the use of the word "assurance," on the ground of its not being Scriptural?

The Lexical authorities, with the exception of Stephens, whose account of the word is well worth studying, are in the main against Mr. Wesley's conclusion. They generally render the word by *certitudo, plenissima persuasio, certissima fiducia*, or by some other term which involves the notion of "assurance." Grimm, however, admits the rendering *plenitudo, abundantia, copia;* and Stephens regards the expressions πληροφορία πίστεως, ἐλπίδος, συνέσεως, as equivalent to πλήρης or πεπληρωμένη πίστις, ἐλπίς, σύνεσις. In estimating the value of Lexical testimony as to the sense of this word it must be remembered that the word is strictly Biblical and Patristic; no light is shed upon its interpretation by classical usage; and all renderings of it are more or less coloured by the prejudices of ecclesiastical writers.

The Versions, with remarkable unanimity, follow the lead of the Vulgate, in rendering the word by some term expressive of "fulness." In three out of the four places in which the word occurs, the Vulgate renders it by "plenitudo; in the fourth instance by "expletio." Wiclif uses either "plente" or "fillynge;" Tyndale uses "full," "certayntie," and "stablischynge;" Cranmer follows Tyndale, but in one instance uses "sure;" the Geneva Version reads "persuaded understanding," "certaintie of persuasion," "ful persuasion," and "fulfayth;" the Rheims Version, "fulness" and "accomplishing." Beza, as might have been expected, diverges from the Vulgate. His renderings are: Col. ii. 2, "plene certioratæ intelligentiæ;" 1 Thess. i. 5, "plena certioratione multa;" Heb. vi. 11, "plenam spei certiorationem;" but x. 22, he renders "plenitudine fidei."

The majority of the more critical commentators favour a rendering similar to that of the Authorised Version. Very few of them, however, venture on any analysis of the word πληροφορία in defence of their rendering. Delitzsch is an exception. He says: "The noun πληροφορία is generally = full conviction, joyous assurance,—a meaning so entirely suitable here [Heb. vi. 11], that we must, with most expositors, abide by it." "The verb πληροφορεῖν," says he, "signifies *to fulfil, thoroughly accomplish*, or *discharge, to give full satis-*

faction or *full proof;* then (*pass.*) *to be fully persuaded*, and also *to be well attested*, so as to produce full conviction. It is a peculiarly Alexandrine word." He adds further: "The meaning of the noun may always be traced back to that of 'full conviction, entire confidence,' which is found in the passive verb."

In favour of an interpretation which excludes the idea of "assurance," there are many authorities of great weight. Such are Bleek, De Wette, Cornelius A. Lapide, Grotius, Schulz, Ewald, Olshausen, and others. Bishop Lightfoot in his note on Col. ii. 2 renders *τῆς πληροφορίας* by "the full assurance," and goes on to say "for such seems to be the meaning of the substantive wherever it occurs in the New Testament." How little importance, however, he attaches to this rendering, may be gathered from what follows: "With the exception of 1 Thess. i. 5, all the Biblical passages might bear the other sense, 'fulness.'" He admits also that the verb *πληροφορεῖν* has several senses, some of which do not include the idea of assurance. Professor Jowett in his note on 1 Thess. i. 5 proposes three explanations of *πληροφορία*: (i.) certainty, (ii.) fulness of spiritual gifts, (iii.) effect, fulfilment. Webster and Wilkinson, on the same passage, render the word "great abundance," that is, of declaration and evidence. Dr. Kay, in the Speaker's Commentary on Heb. vi. 11, explains the word by: "the full energy of development." "Of itself," he adds, "the word denotes simply the completeness with which the faculty produces its own fruit." The passage in Heb. x. 22 he explains: "So that our faith may have its full development." In the same passages Dr. Moulton (Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers) renders the term "fulness," "full productiveness;" and Dr. Barry, in the same Commentary, on the passage in Colossians, renders *τῆς πληροφορίας τῆς συνέσεως* "fulness of intelligence."

On the whole: in consideration of the fact that the etymology of the word *πληροφορία* does not necessarily involve the sense of assurance,—and considering further that the passages in which the word occurs in Holy Scripture may be clearly interpreted without any reference to assurance, I venture to conclude that Mr. Wesley was justified in his statement: "Assurance is a word I do not use, because it is not Scriptural."

[Note C.]

In a letter to Mr. Richard Tompson [Works: xii. 468] Mr. Wesley says: "With regard to the assurance of faith, I apprehend that the whole Christian Church in the first centuries enjoyed it. For though we have few points of doctrine explicitly taught in the small remains of the ante-Nicene Fathers, yet I think none that carefully read Clemens Romanus, Ignatius, Polycarp, Origen, or any other of them, can doubt whether either the writer himself possessed it, or all whom he mentions as real Christians. And I really conceive, both from the *Harmonia Confessionum*, and whatever else I have occasionally read, that all the Reformed Churches in Europe did once believe,—Every true Christian has the Divine evidence of his being in the favour of God." Further he says: "I know likewise that Luther, Melancthon, and many others (if not all) of the Reformers, frequently and strongly assert that every believer is conscious of his own acceptance with God, and that by a supernatural evidence."

In the able little volume on the "Witness of the Spirit," by the Rev. Charles Prest, to which reference has already been made, a very remarkable list of Fathers, Bishops, and Divines, representing almost every age and every school of thought, is given, with extracts from their works illustrative of their full belief in this doctrine. The list, which might be largely supplemented, contains the names of Clement, Novatian, Chrysostom; Anselm, Bernard, Luther, Melancthon, Peter Martyr; Bullinger, Hooper, Ridley, Cranmer, Tyndale, Bradford; Whittaker; Arminius, Grotius; Archbishops Abbot, Usher, Wake; Bishops Abbot, Andrews, Babington, Cooper, Brownrig, Davenant, Hopkins, Jewel, Pearson, Reynolds, Wilkins, Barlow, Hall, with Boys, Barrow, Donne, Dent, Field, Hooker, Mede, South, Whitby, Wills, Robinson, Simeon, Leathes, Kingsley, and other distinguished divines of the Church of England. The list includes also some of the noblest names in the ranks of Puritanism and Nonconformity. In it are found Goodwin, Perkins, Burroughs, Simon Ford, Byfield, Dyke, Wilson, Preston, Manton, Poole, Owen, Isaac Ambrose, Samuel Clarke, Sibbes, Bolton, Doddridge, Gill, Howe, and Watts. Mr. Prest also cites the Confessions of Augsburg [1538], Bohemia [1573], France [1559], and the Saxon Confession [1551]; the Lambeth Articles [1595]; the Homilies of the Church of England; Certain Questions and Answers, printed by Robert Barker

[1607], and bound up at that time with our English Bibles; "Certain godly Prayers to be used for sundry purposes," immediately following the Psalms, in the Book of Common Prayer [1608]; and other valuable documents, in all of which the doctrine of the Witness of the Spirit, as held substantially by the Wesleyan Methodists, is clearly affirmed. Indeed, the doctrine of "special and particular assurance was never condemned for heresy before the Council of Trent condemned it." [Perkin's Works: i. 540].

Sir William Hamilton, in his Discussions on Philosophy, &c. [508-9], remarks: "Assurance, personal assurance, special faith (the feeling of certainty that God is propitious to me, that my sins are forgiven, *fiducia*, *plerophoria fidei*, *fides specialis*), was long universally held in the Protestant communities to be the criterion and condition of a true or saving faith. . . . Assurance stands essentially part and parcel of all the Confessions of all the Churches of the Reformation down to the Westminster Assembly. . . . In the English, and more particularly in the Irish Establishment" (this of course was written more than twenty years ago), "it still stands a necessary tenet of ecclesiastical belief. Assurance was consequently held by all the older Anglican Churchmen, of whom Hooker may stand for the example; but it is now openly disavowed, without scruple, by Anglican Churchmen, High and Low."

A few representative extracts will suffice to show how generally the doctrine of the Witness of the Spirit has been, and is yet held, by the Protestant Churches. "With regard to the certainty (or assurance) of salvation," says Arminius, "my opinion is, that it is possible for him who believes in Jesus Christ to be certain and persuaded, and if his heart condemn him not, he is now in reality assured, that he is a son of God, and stands in the grace of Jesus Christ. Such a certainty is wrought in the mind, as well by the action of the Holy Ghost inwardly actuating the believer, and by the fruits of faith, as from his own conscience and the testimony of God's Spirit witnessing together with his conscience" [Works: i. 603]. "This," says Dr. Isaac Barrow in his sermon on the Gift of the Holy Ghost, "is that 'Spirit of Adoption' which constituteth us the sons of God, qualifying us so to be, by dispositions resembling God, and filial affections towards Him, certifying us that we are so, and causing us, by a free instinct, to cry, Abba, Father." Bishop Davenant in his Commentary on Colossians says: "The Holy Spirit specially seals each particular believer, and makes him sure of his adoption by a certain wonderful and secret testimony; and He

finally pronounces in the hearts of the godly that they are in favour with God." "The Spirit which God hath given us to assure us that we are the sons of God," says Richard Hooker, "to enable us to call upon Him as our Father" [Sermon on Certainty of Faith]. "It is the office of the Holy Ghost," says Bishop Pearson, "to assure us of the adoption of sons, to create in us a sense of the paternal love of God towards us, to give us an earnest of our everlasting inheritance. As, therefore, we are born again by the Spirit, so we are also assured by the same Spirit of our adoption" [Exposition of the Creed]. In one of his noblest sermons, Dr. South, after affirming that under the Gospel there must needs be the same intimacies which God maintained under the law, with those whom He loved, says: "Assurance is a rarity covered from the inspection of the world; a secret that none can know but God and the person that is blessed with it; it is writ in a private character, not to be read nor understood but by the conscience, to which the Spirit of God has vouchsafed to decipher it. Every believer lives upon an inward provision of comfort that the world is a stranger to." In his treatise on the Self-denial of Moses, Burroughs writes: "The Spirit does not write opinions but assertions in our hearts, more certain than life itself, and all experiences whatever. Strengthen your faith by the assurance of your interest in the covenant of grace, and in the assurance of God's fatherly love unto you." "Fear," says Simon Ford, "is banished by a soft whisper from the Spirit of God in the heart; and this, in such a way, that though the spirit of a man is immediately calmed by it, yet it cannot tell how it comes to pass." [On Adoption, 217.] "The Holy Spirit," says Poole in his Annotations, "witnesseth to our spirit by a distinct and immediate testimony, and witnesseth with our spirit by a conjunctive and concurrent testimony." In his work on Communion with God [Works: x. 310] Dr. John Owen says: "The Comforter comes; and by a word of promise, or otherwise, overpowers the heart with a comfortable persuasion, and bears down all objections, that he is a child of God." "Not the most exquisite music," says Robert Bolton, "can convey so delicious a touch to the outward ear of a man, as the sound of a certificate brought from the throne of mercy by the Blessed Spirit, sealed with Christ's blood, to the ear of the soul." In a sermon on the Witness of the Spirit, Dr. Doddridge says: "He acts under the character of a Comforter: it is the voice of God, inwardly speaking to the soul, to confirm its hopes and to awaken

its joys, saying, 'Son! Daughter! be of good courage: thy sins are forgiven thee.'" "The spirits of the saints," says Dr. Gill, "receive the witness of the Spirit of God,—not to their ears, not an audible testimony; but to their hearts; it is internal to their understandings, that they may know and be assured of it. Now it is the Spirit Himself that bears this witness, and not others, or by others, but He Himself in Person, Who is a Divine Witness, Whose testimony therefore must be greater than others,—and a faithful Witness, Who will never deceive, for He witnesses what He knows, and what is sure and certain." [On Romans viii.]

Many extracts of similar import might be given from more recent writers; though it cannot be denied that the theology of recent times is less pervaded by the teaching of this doctrine than that of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. The reason it is not difficult to divine.

I will close with one final passage which I have not seen quoted in any work on this subject. It is from "the Reverend Father and Faithful Servant of God, Mr. William Cowper, Bishop of Galloway." "Unless the Holy Spirit testify unto us that God is become our Father, and hath made us His children, we dare not go near Him, to crave good things of Him. The beginning of our acquaintance with God flows from Him. We must first receive from God some secret information of His love and Fatherly affection, or ever we be able to return unto Him the desires, the words, and the deeds of His loving children. . . . . Now this testimony of the Spirit is the secret voice of God, whereby He speaks from heaven unto thine heart, assuring thee that He is thine, and thou art His. No man can conceive what it is, unless he have received it, for it giveth that 'new name' which none can know but they who have it, and that 'hidden manna' which none do understand but they who taste it. It is not gotten but after long and unfeigned humiliation, and it is not kept without sanctification; for every sin which the godly commit diminishes in them this testimony of the Spirit." [Works: 94].

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